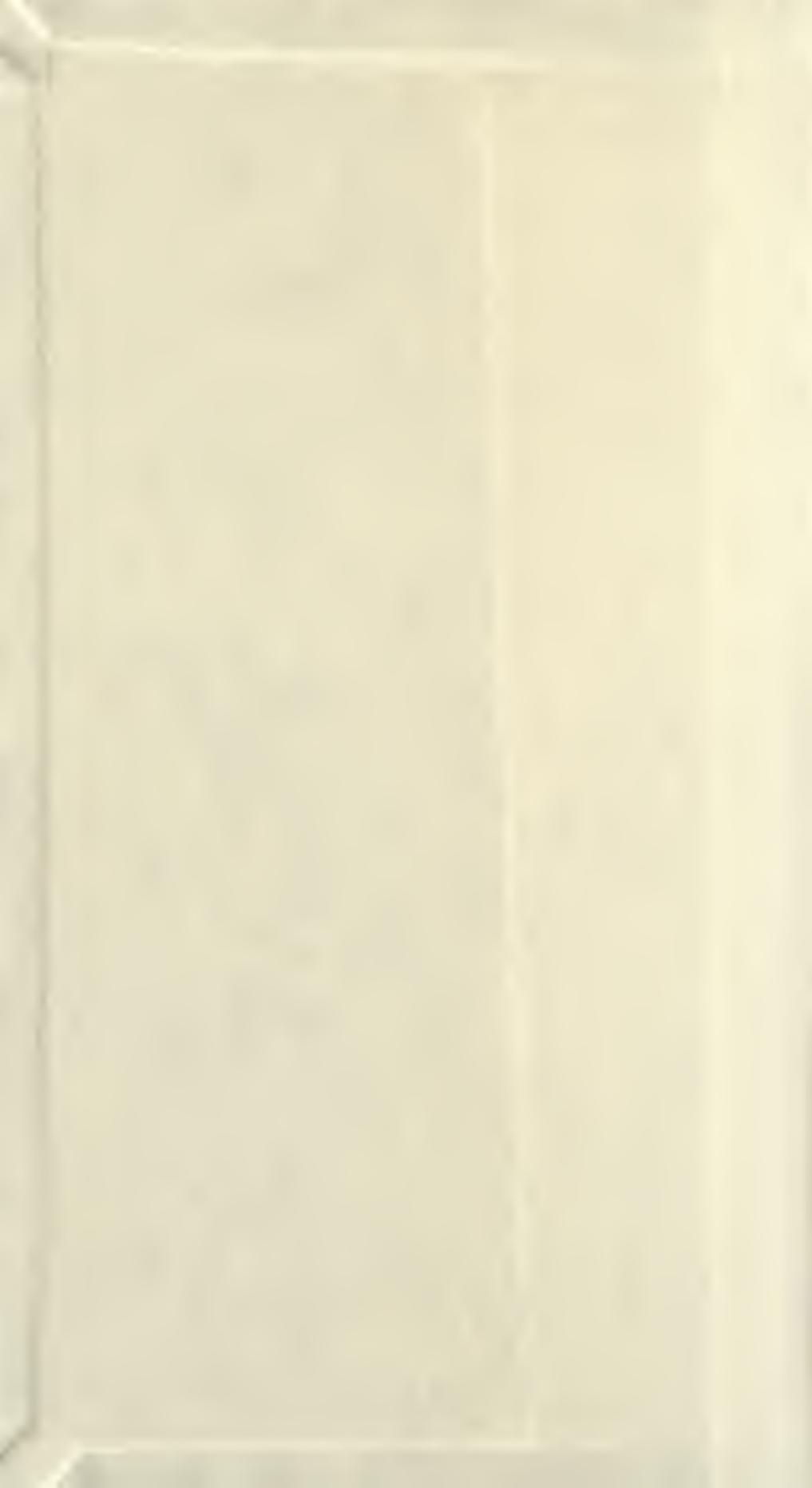
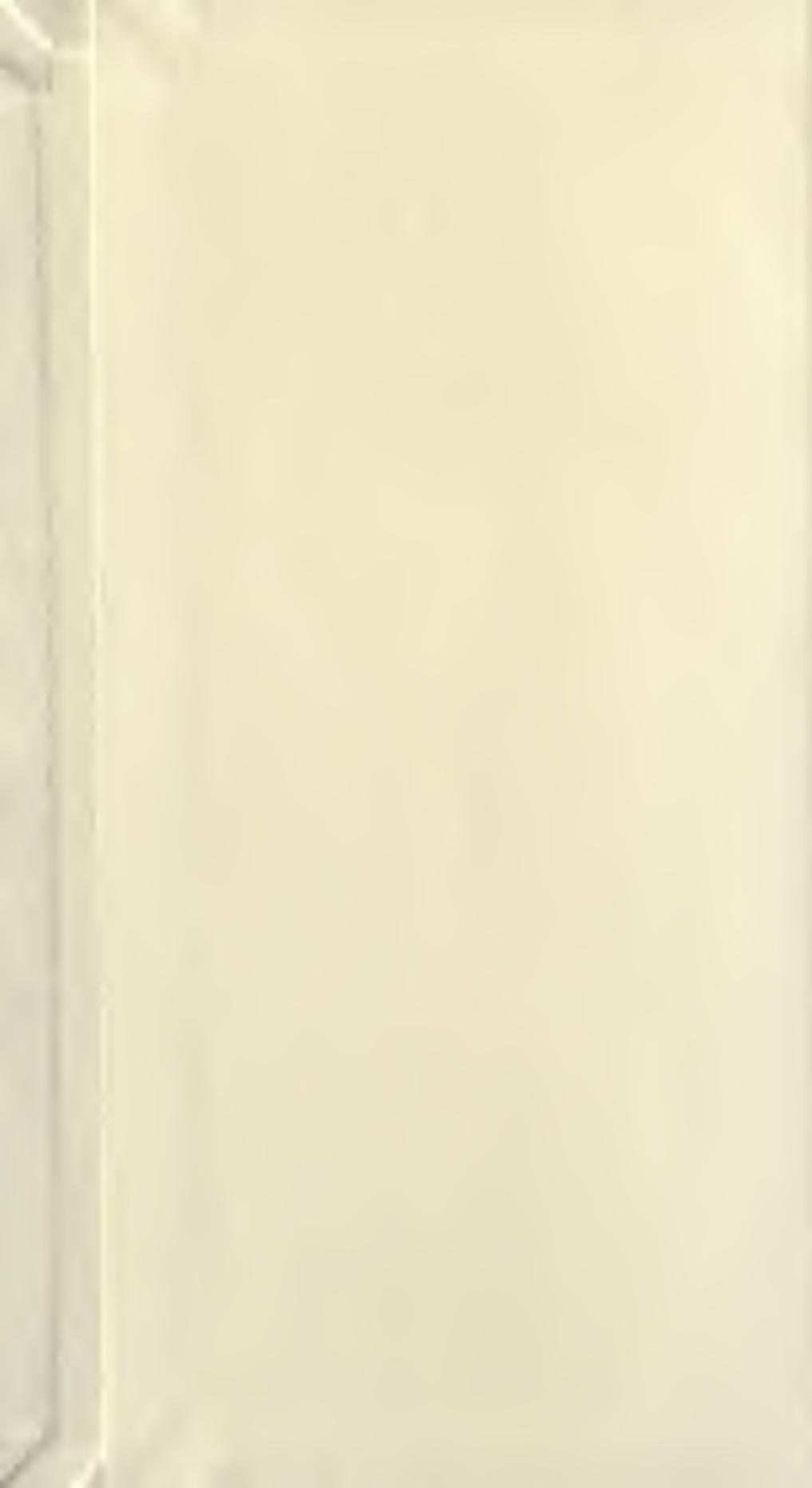




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EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS

TO THE

(92)

MEMBERS OF THE METHODIST SOCIETY
IN IRELAND.

Fourth Edition.

TOGETHER WITH A

SERIES OF LETTERS.

TO

ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.

OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS ON THE AUTHOR'S
EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS TO THE
METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

BY JOHN WALKER,
Late Fellow of Trinity College Dublin.

*Bring all things to the test. 1 Theſſ. v. 21.
To the law and to the testimony. Isa. viii. 20.*

silence
taken.

I am &c EDINBURGH:
tion--b PRINTED BY J. RITCHIE.

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1806.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE ADDRESS contained in the following pages has been meditated for many years; and has remained by me for many months, nearly in its present form. I delayed the publication, in the intention of rendering what I had written less imperfect, and of treating some of the topics (particularly towards the conclusion) more at large. But finding that it becomes increasingly uncertain, when that intention might be realized, I now send the piece out without further delay; convinced that something of the kind is much needed, and not without hope that it may be made of some use.

To myself, I am aware, it is likely to produce only an increase of various trials, from which nature would desire to shrink; but the prospect of which must not deter the servant of Christ from the onward path of duty. The body, to whom this Address is immediately directed, is numerous, active, and jealous of its interests. I can truly say, that I have endeavoured to avoid giving them any *needless* offence; but I know that much offence will be taken.

I am sensible also, that other professors of religion—besides the Methodists, and differing from them—are likely to be offended by various passages in the following address. To some it will appear too liberal; to others too uncharitable; to many, too little accommodated (in certain parts) to the systematic forms of expression, long current in the religious world.—In short, the writer who takes the sacred Scriptures *alone* for the standard of his faith,

and takes the *whole* of them, must expect opposition and dislike, more or less, from all sects and parties.

As to the openly careless and carnal,—if any such read these pages,—while they may perhaps agree with me in condemning some of the practical errors which I mark, yet I am persuaded that to them the views of the **GOSPEL** which I propose are much less congenial, than the system of theology maintained by Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher. In every religious system which has *self* for its fundamental principle, the world can find something to approve, and something which it understands. But the **GOSPEL**, which proposes a foundation for the sinner's hope altogether *out of himself*, and calls him to a life which he is to “live—not by *himself*—but by the faith of the **SON** of **GOD**,”—is on this account peculiarly offensive to the world, and peculiarly unintelligible.

The **Gospel**, however, is to be declared, and to be maintained: and will continue to be, “to them which are called, the power of **GOD** and the wisdom of **GOD**.”—To his blessing I commend this little piece; hoping that, if it receive an answer from any of those to whom it is addressed, it may be answered in the same spirit in which I have endeavoured to write.

August 9th, 1802.

WITHIN these few days, I have read with serious attention a pamphlet containing, "Remarks" on this Address, by ALEXANDER KNOX, Esq. M. R. I. A.—The remarks extend to a very small part indeed of the address ; and even as far as they extend are very little apposite. They certainly afford me no reason for withholding from the public this second Edition of my little piece ; which (after all Mr. Knox has said) I believe contains no more than salutary admonition to the body, whom he thinks I unwarrantably attack.—Any verbal alterations that I make as it goes through the press, I shall acknowledge at the end.

The ingenious writer of the Remarks, appears to be very solicitous about the *reputation* of the METHODISTS ; which I can assure him I am as little solicitous to invade, as I am to defend my own. Persuaded as I am that the more clearly we maintain and exhibit the simplicity of the real GOSPEL of CHRIST, the more we shall be disliked and despised by the *world*,—I consider the reputation of any man or men, as too unimportant to be contended for or against. And if, in the writer's zeal about that question (to which I believe he was prompted, in some measure, by very amiable feelings of personal friendship) he had not involved some more important matters, I should not think myself called on to take any further notice of his remarks.

But there are points of *divine truth* at issue between him and me, which will oblige me (if life be spared) to reply to his pamphlet. These are matters, from the discussion of which I dare not shrink ; tho' the more I vindicate them, the lower I am sure, *my* reputation in the world will sink. But God forbid that Christians should wish to have a higher reputation in the world than their divine Lord and Master !

Both the state of my health, and the multiplicity of my engagements, may prevent my remarks on Mr. Knox's pamphlet appearing, as soon as some might expect. Perhaps they may appear in about two months. I can very seldom take up my pen at all; and then I cannot write hastily, and dare not upon these subjects. Meanwhile I hope *some* of the METHODISTS will be led to attend to the voice of serious admonition in the following pages,—in spite of the more grateful sound of panegyric which their advocate pours into their ears. They will yet know that the Monitor is their more real friend, than the Panegyrist.

November 22d, 1802.

AN

EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS,

&c.

BRETHREN,

I HAVE long wished to address you ; and have long been prevented by other engagements, as well as deterred by the difficulty of addressing you as I wish. If my object were to write for one party against another, to expose your errors for the sake of pleasing those who differ from you, I would find no difficulty in the task ; and I have not wanted occasions for undertaking it. But I trust I have a much higher aim. While I would candidly mark what I consider dangerous errors in your body, I would do this, not for the sake of victory but of truth. While I would address you with all the simplicity of reproof, where I think it needful, I would rather win you by conviction, than triumph over you by argument. While I would attempt to rectify your misconceptions and remove your prejudices, I would desire to exercise all patience and tenderness, towards those who labour under them. While I would boldly contend for the most important truth, I am anxious to be kept under the blessed influence of that truth, for which I contend.

To combine these things is no easy matter : it is impossible to man. But I look to him, without whom I can do nothing ; beseeching him to keep

my spirit throughout this address under his gracious control. Brethren, look ye also to him, as many of you as open these pages; that you may read them with candour, that you may not be suffered to shut your minds against seasonable admonition or reproof; but may examine for yourselves, and “ prove all things”—not by human authority, but by that divine word which abideth for ever.

I have long wished for an opportunity of brotherly intercourse, and free communication, with real Christians in your society. Such, I am persuaded, differ less from real Christians of other denominations, than they are taught to imagine. I wish that we should know each other, understand and impart to each other. The people of God are all *his workmanship*, and all *taught of him*. His work and teaching are the same in them all, as to their leading characters; and where they seem to differ, their difference arises from the mixture of man’s work and teaching with the divine. Amidst all that mixture, I can from the heart join in the apostle’s prayer, “ Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!” and I rejoice in the appearances, which have for some time past indicated a more general diffusion of the truly catholic spirit, expressed in that prayer.

But suffer me to remonstrate with you on the opposite temper of party-spirit, which seems increasingly to prevail in your body. The Methodist Society in Ireland appears alarmed at the growing union of other Christians who have lately been stirred up to co-operate in spreading the glorious Gospel of God through the country; and in the magnitude of that one object (in which their hearts feel a common interest) are forgetting the subordinate differences, which before kept them asunder. Is it not a party-spirit, that makes the Methodist Society not only stand aloof from this blessed union, but oppose it? and that, in many instances, by acts the most unwarrantable, and misrepresentations the most ground-

less? Those whose exertions you oppose have no object, but to be instruments of turning sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Is it not a party-spirit which suggests a fear, that the Methodist interest will be injured by their exertions? I know that those who have been most violent in the opposition of which I speak, would assign various reasons why they are in this doing God service. But let them take heed: Saul thought the same when he persecuted the early Christians. They ought to take more pains, to examine into the principles and conduct of those whom they oppose, before they represent them as hostile to the true gospel. Some of your Society who professed to have lived for years without sin in thought, word, or deed, will sooner or later find that they have been living in that most awful sin, of speaking all manner of evil falsely against others, who—though not following with you—are following Christ, and serving him in the Gospel. Far am I from intimating, that all of you alike are influenced by this spirit. I have met among you individuals, who were blessedly delivered from it. I call on such to oppose the growth of it in your Society.

But it is not only your opposition to the present union of Christians in various churches, for the purpose of advancing the interest of the universal church of Christ,—it is not only your opposition to this that marks a too general party-spirit in the Methodist Society: other evidences of the same have long existed. The principal concern of many among you has long appeared to be, about the increase of your own body. Numbers—numbers to be added to your Society—that has seemed their great object; short of which nothing satisfies them; and with which, and a strict adherence to the discipline of METHODISM, they are, indeed, easily satisfied without any thing else. Hence when they deal with a person under the influence of divine grace, no evidence of its reality can content them, till he become a METHODIST. Hence their

representations to him, that he can never be completely right, till he join in their class-meeting. Hence their industrious arts to blacken in his view other Christians, to connexion with whom he may seem disposed. Hence their endeavours to entangle his conscience, by insinuating that his indisposition to become a Methodist arises from worldly fear or shame,—from aversion to the reproach of the Cross of Christ ; as if that reproach were exclusively attached to their Society. Hence the manifestations of affectionate attention and solicitude which are heaped upon him, while any hope remains of attaching him to their body. Hence the indifference and uncharitable surmises which succeed, as soon as that hope is done away.

But the moment any one,—however little acquainted with himself or with God, with the law or with the gospel,—gives in his name to the SOCIETY, how easily are they satisfied ! Immediately he is considered as in the way of salvation ; and if he only continue to speak the language, and observe the forms of Methodism, all is well.

Brethren, be more solicitous to consider, whether there is not too just room for these observations, than to refute them. I do not expect that mere party-men among you, while they continue such, will receive these admonitions, and I can anticipate their answers ; but let others attend to them, and beware of the evil. I desire to acknowledge but two great parties—those who through grace are “on the LORD’s side,” and those who are of the world. The former are scattered through various outward churches, under various names : but they are all one body having one Lord, one faith, one hope. Nothing but blind bigotry suggests that they are to be found only under one denomination ; or leads any to act as if they thought so. That bigotry, blessed be God, is lessening among lively christians of all denominations. They are daily discovering themselves to be BRETHREN, and acting in brotherly concert for the advance-

ment of that one cause, which alone will certainly prevail. That is not the cause of any human party, or outward denomination in the Church of Christ. It is the cause of Christ's kingdom. And shall you be alarmed by their union, or jealous of their exertions?

I pass to another evil among you, closely connected with the former ; and that is an idolatrous attachment to men and submission to human authority, in matters of religion. I conceive some of you already startled, lest I should touch the reputation of WESLEY or of FLETCHER. Brethren, to them it is of little consequence what you or I think of them. But it is of the utmost consequence to you to remember that divine rule, "call no man master or Father, upon earth : for one is your master, even Christ—one is your Father which is in Heaven."—I do think that the Methodist society has awfully forgotten this rule ; and under the mask of following these men as they followed Christ, has set them up in the place of Christ ; implicitly adopting their sentiments, and regulating its faith and practice by theirs. The more any of you are shocked or offended at this observation, as derogatory to their character, the more is the justice of the observation evinced. Even though they were less deeply erroneous than I think they were, yet it would be surprising if men who had written so much, and done so much, had not erred. But will Methodists, in general, bear the idea of imputing error to those men ? Is it not generally enough to impose any maxim or opinion upon them, that Wesley or Fletcher said it ? Are not their writings treated by you as paramount to the scriptures ? Is it the Scriptures you put into the hands of those, whom you have made or want to make converts to Methodism ? No, you send them for the most part to Fletcher's *Checks* ; and stuff their poor heads with bad metaphysics and worse divinity, before they have rightly learned the first principles of the gospel of Christ. And if they be di-

ected to the Scriptures at all, they must read them accompanied by Wesley's notes, for fear they should imbibe from the scriptures any thing contrary to Methodism. This is the way to make Methodists—zealous, bigotted Methodists ; but indeed it is not the way to make simple and devoted Christians. It is the way to inflame their minds against the persons, whom Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher opposed, and to make them bitter controversialists ; but it is not the way to combat their natural prejudices against the truths of God, or to feed them with the sincere milk of his word.

Ask yourselves, Brethren, how many of your present opinions have you adopted from a serious—diligent—and humble examination of the scriptures, in the spirit of prayer, waiting on the Father of Lights for that wisdom which cometh from above ; and how many, from a rash submission to the authority of human teachers ? I know so much of this spirit among you, that I am aware many, into whose hands this address will come, are likely to think me worse than an infidel, for even hinting a doubt of the excellence of Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Fletcher's writings. Yes ; I know that some will not endure the man, who shall venture to drop a hint derogatory to *their* honour ; while they easily bear in their writings, and readily adopt from them sentiments, the most derogatory to the honour of God our Saviour.

The root of this evil lies deep ; even in the conformation of your Society. According to its original constitution, none could be members of it, but those who paid an *absolute submission* to Mr. Wesley's authority in matters great and small*. He claimed and exercised uncontrolled power over his numerous societies ; and vindicates himself from the

* " Give no tickets to any that wear Calashes,"—nor " to any man or woman, who does not promise to leave off snuff and tobacco."—*Minutes of several conversations between the reverend Mr. Wesley and others.*

charge of "making himself a Pope," and "shackling freeborn Englishmen," by urging that to *him* "the preachers had engaged themselves, to submit to *serve him* as sons in the Gospel :" that to *him* "the people in general would submit ;" and that "every preacher and every member might leave him when he pleased *."

How solicitous Mr. Wesley was to attach this authority to every thing he wrote, is evinced even by that instruction to his assistants contained in his minutes—to "take care that every society be duly supplied with books ; particularly with *Kempis, Instructions for Children*, and the PRIMITIVE PHYSIC : which ought to be in every house. O ! why is not this regarded ?" † It really is not to excite a smile, that I make such a quotation : but, if possible, to excite your attention to a fact, melancholy in its consequences. I pretend not to decide on Mr. Wesley's character in the sight of God. He was actively laborious in his life : and I am informed was most amiable in his manners, and winning in his address. That, no doubt, contributed to the overgrown influence which he possessed. But this I know, that an Apostle would not have attempted to usurp such dominion over you, as he established over his Societies. Nor has his authority died with him. His name and his writings still enable persons much inferior to him in talents, to maintain that dominion. But judge ye, how far a Christian is warranted by scripture, in becoming a member of any Society, upon such terms of absolute submission to the authority of a man—even to the best and wisest of men.

But Brethren, besides your party-spirit and your idolatrous veneration of men, there are other evils, to which I desire to call your attention. Looking at the general aspect of Methodism, and comparing it with the christianity of the Gospel, I see a striking

* Ibid. pag. 20.

† Ibid. page 28.

contrast indeed—between the obtrusive, tumultuous bustle of the one, and the calm and sober, though happy and heavenly, character of the other. You hold, indeed, scriptural and important phrases: but in the sense in which you hold them, and the manner in which you apply them (as a body), they appear quite different things from what I discover in the scripture. Faith, grace, justification, sanctification, &c. are terms in frequent use among you: but they seem all perverted, and employed to sanction a system of *human feelings*, strongly wrought on either in the way of distressing terror, or joyful emotion. These you call *experience*; and any man who maintains the precariousness and insufficiency of these, you are too ready to pronounce an enemy to *experimental religion*.

Brethren, I hold as strongly as any of you, that all true religion begins and is carried on by the power of God experienced in the heart; but I know that this is perfectly distinct from the natural agitation of the passions, into which it seems the object of the Methodistic system to lash the minds of its members. I can see no divine power in the mechanical groan, and the periodical Amen, without which you think your religious meetings lifeless. I can see no divine power in those tumultuous assemblies, which have at various times been encouraged among you, and are now encouraged, where two or three, or more, are at the same moment uttering petitions to God with Stentorian voices, and others are going about among the people urging them to cry out—till their nerves are wrought upon to screeching, swooning, and various hysterical affections, which you are taught to consider as the power of God. When attempts are made to impose this on the world for religion, serious Christians will be disposed to weep, and the rest of mankind to laugh. I know that you do not all take a part in these meetings, to which I allude; that they are not yet universal among you. But there must be some awful delusion on the minds of a Society,

which not only tolerates, but countenances and approves of such practices.

But do I not see the *principle* of them sanctioned by the highest authority among you, in the return made by your leaders of the specific numbers, who were *convinced*, who were *justified*, who were *sanctified*, at the several places, at which they preached?—i. e. of the numbers who, under sudden feelings of terror, feelings of joy, or feelings of what they call holiness, *cried out* in language corresponding to these instantaneous impressions. Indeed, Brethren, there must be a radical error in the system upon which such a fabric can be built. I restrain myself from expressing what I fear of the men, who lead you into such a quagmire of blasphemous absurdity. But I call on you not to be deterred by the weight of their names, or the number of their followers, from looking at the delusion in its naked deformity.

Having mentioned, in general, what you call your *experience*, I am led to say a few words on those meetings in which you speak of this experience with each other—your *class-meetings*, and *love feasts*. I think I know something of the blessedness of free intercourse and unreserved communication between christians. But I am persuaded that meetings, conducted as yours are, must prove in many instances highly injurious; and perhaps they are most injurious to those who like them most.—At them, each member of your Society is weekly called on to declare the state of his soul, in the presence of others, to the number of 12 or 20. The most truly experienced christian is best able to say, how nice and trying a matter it is, to speak before others of himself, and of his walk with God. It is not at all times or at any periodical intervals, that he will dare to attempt it; and when he does see it expedient to speak upon the subject, it will be with holy fear, whether he speaks of his sorrows or of his joys. But among you the weakest are every week put upon this exercise: those who have no real experi-

ence in religion at all, are brought forward to declare their experience, and drilled either into hypocrisy or self-deceit. They hear one and another around them speaking the language of complaint or of rejoicing, of distressing anxiety or assured confidence; and they, in their turn, retail the gleanings of the phraseology they have heard. They utter perhaps the most humiliating complaints of themselves, and are secretly filled with a proud satisfaction at the thought of having complained so well and spoken so humbly. Set in motion by this gust of self-complacency, they are ready to receive the exhortation, which their class-leader gives them, to work out strenuously what is wanting of their salvation. They report progress at the next meeting, for which they have been preparing in the interval. They have now to say (as they have heard others say,) that they are thirsting—wrestling—on the stretch—for *justification*. They are sent away with encouragement, perhaps, to win it that night by violence; and in all probability, by the following meeting, they will have to declare that they have obtained—that which they are taught to call *justification*—a lively impression on their minds, of some words of scripture, as if a voice from heaven told them that their sins were forgiven. The poor creature is then rejoiced over, and rejoices over himself, as having experienced the blessing;—talks of this experience with delight; and mistakes his fondness of talking of it for zeal and spiritual fervour. He is given to understand, that all he needs now is to keep up those feelings, and to go on in the same way, to attain what is called *sanctification*. He is questioned weekly as to his progress, in this effort, or perhaps is employed to question others; and if he only continue regular in attending his class, and precise in the observation of Methodist discipline, no doubt is entertained by himself or others of his christianity: while he has only exchanged, perhaps, the sins of drunkenness and swearing, for the sins of spiritual pride, censoriousness,

and hypocrisy. If he can only deceive himself then sufficiently to imagine that all sin is at some instant exterminated from within him, the course is finished ; and his *experience* held up as a pattern to all the Society.

Let me not be understood to mean, that *all* run such a course, who talk of their experience at your class meetings. God forbid ! I trust many attend them, who are kept honest and simple in heart ; though such, I believe, are often made miserable, by them. But you have a very different idea from me of the human heart,—its deceitfulness and corruption :—if you do not think such a course is the natural consequence of such meetings. Yet I am aware, that these meetings are a favorite part of your system : and I do not wonder at it ; for they are peculiarly adapted to keep you together as a body. I know to what imputations the declaration of my opinion about them will expose me. But I shall be thankful, if what I have said shall even excite any of you, in attending them, to use more caution, more secret prayer, more inward watchfulness, than formerly.

But some of you perhaps are ready to say—“ what right has this man to suppose, that any among us walk in such a self-deceiving course, or make such a false profession of experience, as he has just now described ? ” I candidly own, that I have met some Methodists, and read of others, who to my judgment gave evidence of being in various stages of that course. But indeed I am not fond of deciding on the state or character of individuals, where there is any room for doubt. But I must add that there are some among you, of whom I can have no doubt that they are in the last and most awful stage of it : I mean all those, who avow that they have attained that same perfection in holiness, in consequence of which they live *without sin in thought, word or deed*. “ Aye,”—methinks I hear some exclaim—“ now what we suspected appears : he is a CALVINIST —an advocate for sin—an enemy to holiness.”

Well, Brethren! as one said long ago—" strike—but hear me;"—so would I say—think of me as ill as you please, but reject not what I offer without a serious and candid examination. To the charge of being a *Calvinist*, I shall say a few words by and by. But whatever I be, I believe as firmly, and declare as explicitly, as any *Methodist*, that "without *holiness* no man shall see the Lord." But I believe the nature of that *holiness* is awfully mistaken by many *Methodists*, and misrepresented in your system; and while I believe the Bible, I must be certain that any man, who says *he has no sin* is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and my reverence for the *divine* authority will not allow me to be deterred from avowing that certainty, by the names or estimation of any men, who have told that lie, or countenanced others in telling it.

The methodistic idea of *sanctification* is, in plain English, this: that the corrupt nature of man becomes in believers less and less corrupt, through the influence of divine grace aiding their exertions: till at length it becomes wholly good, perfectly purified from all evil; and this of course *instantaneously*:—for, as Mr. Wesley observes, "If sin cease before death, there must in the nature of the thing be an *instantaneous* change—there must be a last minute wherein it does exist, and a first minute wherein it does not." Ib. (Wesley's minutes) page 39.—So that a man, under the work of grace, becomes first, in Mr. Fletcher's phraseology, a *carnal penitent*, then a *Christian believer*, then a *perfect Christian*. (*Fletcher's last check*, page 115, 116.)

Now I scruple not to pronounce the whole of this idea unscriptural, from first to last, though very natural, and harmonizing, more than its supporters are aware, with the popular ideas of christianity, which prevail among the carnal world. According to Scripture, I am not warranted to consider it any part of the work of grace to *mend* our fallen nature. *That* nature is as bad—as wholly evil—in a believer,

as in an unbeliever,—as bad in the most established believer, as in the weakest;—as bad in Paul the apostle, just finishing his course, and ready to receive the crown of righteousness, as in Saul of Tarsus, a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the Church of Christ. Indeed if that old nature, called in Scripture the *Flesh*, became during our Christian course less and less evil, the believer would have less and less occasion to watch against the flesh, “to deny *himself*, to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, to walk not after the flesh,” &c. And if, at any period, it became purged from all evil, it would then become a Christian duty “to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”—But the Scriptures declare, and the experience of every believer to the end confirms it, that “the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;” that these two are “contrary the one to the other:”—that the carnal mind, or flesh, or corrupt nature, is not only at enmity with God—(if it were only so, it might perhaps in time become a friend)—but is in itself “enmity against God;”—that it not only “is not subject to the law of God;” but indeed “cannot be.” The Scriptures represent the whole course of the believer here below, as a warfare—not only against the world and the devil—but against the *flesh*, that most dangerous ally of both: and give us no reason to suppose, that *any* part of this warfare ceases, but with the present mortal life. The opposite view, which you are taught, is certainly much more self-complacent;—but that will not recommend it to the better mind of a believer. It would be much more gratifying to the pride of our hearts, to think that, however bad we may be naturally, yet we are not so bad but that we may be *mended*; and it is the general idea of all men—the most careless and the most profane. But, indeed, our most strenuous exertions to effect that object, are but spending our strength in vain: and it is worse than in vain, where any flatter themselves they have attained it.

What difference then, it may be asked, is there between the believer and the unbeliever? Is it only that the former subscribes to a creed which the latter disbelieves? and can a difference, so small as this, constitute the one accepted in the sight of God, as righteous, and bind the other under condemnation? My brethren, by no means. The difference between them is infinitely great. The believer is, by the rich mercy and saving power of God, brought out of that state of nature, in which all lie originally since the fall of man,—*children of that world* “which lieth in the wicked one,”—*children of disobedience*, in whose hearts “the God of this world reigneth,”—*children of wrath*, under the curse annexed as the immutable penalty to every transgression of the divine law. Out of this guilty and corrupt mass, dead in trespasses and sins, the believer is brought, not by the merit of his faith, but by the mercy and power of God,—into a state of union with the Lord Jesus Christ the head of his mystical body, of that church which he has redeemed, and to every member of which HE is “made of God wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Consider well, Brethren, that passage (1 Cor. i. 30.) from which the latter words are taken. Observe in it a declaration of the *author* of the change which has taken place in the state of believers, GOD,—that God against whom we all have sinned, and by whose grace alone any sinner can be saved:—“*of him* are ye in Christ Jesus”—not of yourselves, of your faithfulness or your works, but “*of him*.” Observe in it a declaration of the *new state* in which believers are placed;—they are “*in CHRIST JESUS*.” Here is that *union* of Christ and his Church, which the apostle pronounces to be “*a great mystery*,” (Ephes. v. 32.) but which is a glorious truth pervading the old testament and the new;—that union, the closeness of which is shadowed out to us in scripture, by the union of husband and wife, who are “*no more two, but one flesh*”—of a tree and its

branches, of a body and its members, &c. Observe again, in the same passage, a declaration of all the blessed consequences which accrue to believers from this union :—“ Christ is made unto them—wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” And observe well, that their *sanctification* is declared to be among these consequences, distinct indeed from their *righteousness* or justification, but equally resulting from their being *in Christ*; agreeably to that description which is given of them in the beginning of the same chapter (1 Cor. i. 2.) as “ *sanctified in Christ Jesus*.”

But what are we to understand by being *sanctified*, or made *holy*? I answer in a word—*separated unto God*, so as to be brought into a particular relation to him, appropriated to his use and service. That this *separation*, from common purposes to sacred, is the literal meaning of the Hebrew word **וְנִטְהָר**, every one acquainted with the original knows: and it may appear evident even to those who are not acquainted with the original, from the application of the terms *holy* and *holiness*, in Scripture, to *things* and *places* as well as to *persons*; as well as from their application to the *Jewish people*, in their collective capacity, as *separated* by the Lord from all the nations of the earth to be “ his peculiar people,” for the purposes for which he had selected them. (See Levit. xx. 24, 26. Deut. vii. 6. xiv. 2.) For still greater and more gracious purposes are believers “ *chosen out of the world*,” and *separated* from it, by being brought into union with Christ;—even “ that God may show the *exceeding riches of his grace*, in his kindness towards them, by **CHRIST JESUS**.” And thus are they all alike “ *sanctified in him*,” from the babe in Christ to the Father;—“ a *holy nation*, a *peculiar people to the Lord*;”—no one of them more or less so than another.

In consequence of the same union, “ the *spirit of holiness*,” the spirit of life and of power, of love and of a sound mind, the **SPIRIT of GOD**,—with the

fulness of which the **Lord Jesus** their head was anointed by the Father,—dwells in them, and descends upon them, producing in them the *fruits of holiness*,—even that cluster of every heavenly affection, which is all declared to be “the fruit of the spirit;”—“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” (Gal. v. 22, 23.) And these fruits are produced in them by their being kept “*abiding in Christ*,” (John xv. 4, 5.) “*living by the faith* of the Son of God, who hath loved them and given himself for them,” (Gal. ii. 20.) “*walking in Christ Jesus* the Lord, as they have received him.” (Col. ii. 6.) And they are kept thus *abiding in Christ*, by the Spirit’s keeping them under a continual conviction of their need of him,—as poor sinners, who have in *themselves* neither righteousness nor strength,—and testifying to their hearts of him in whom alone they “have righteousness and strength,” *in whom* alone “all the seed of Israel is justified and shall glory,”—“*saved in the Lord* with an everlasting salvation:”—(see Isa. xlv. 17. 24, 25.) testifying of his offices and character, of the fulness of grace and truth, of love and saving power, which it has pleased the Father should dwell *in him*. (Col. i. 19.) Thus are believers kept *by the power of God through faith* unto salvation;” (1 Pet. i. 5.) and thus do they grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This work of the spirit, and these *fruits of holiness*, are indeed various in various believers; and in the same believer at various times:—and far be it from me, to assign a low standard for the possible degrees of them! In fact I know *no limit* to them, any more than to “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” or to the Almighty power of God.—It is an unchangeable truth of God, that “if any man have not the *spirit of Christ*, he is none of his:”—and where that spirit really dwells, there will be the *fruits of the spirit*:—and where there is that

fruit, there will be *increasing* fruit. (John xv. 2) —But they mistake the nature of that work, and these fruits of the Spirit, who imagine that it is a work, which *improves* our corrupt nature, or makes it cease to be corrupt and capable of any good fruit.

Judge, Brethren, what I say — Examine it by the revealed word of God, and not by the maxims of your earthly teachers ; and the Lord give you a right understanding in all things !

Very different, indeed, from the views which I have endeavoured to propose, are the views which you have been accustomed to receive, from many of Mr WESLEY's and most of Mr FLETCHER's writings.—Mr. W. tells you (Minutes, &c. ut supra, pag. 4, 39.) “ that men are justified before they are sanctified”—that from the moment we are justified “ there *may be* a gradual sanctification,” and that “ there must be an instantaneous change,” in our life-time, through which sin shall cease to exist in us ;—to which change indeed the term *sanctification* has been, for some time past, almost exclusively applied by you. This is your favorite system : and forgive me, Brethren, when, in faithfulness and love to you, I avow my persuasion that it is a mass of the most dangerous errors.

Error being generally prolific, Mr F. in defending this system,—in those controversial works of his, the study of which constitutes the education of a METHODIST,—has indeed multiplied the errors of it awfully.—I do consider that his polemic writings strike at every principle of divine truth ; and are the more dangerous, on account of the vein of apparent piety and fervent zeal, that runs through them ; as well as on account of that logical *subtlety* which pervades them, and which—though easily detected by men accustomed to reason closely—must yet impose itself for argument on the generality of readers. I say nothing of the unchristian misrepresentation which fills his pages, of his aspersions

and insinuations against those who opposed his errors, as if they were on that account adverse to the strictness of a life devoted to God;—aspersions and insinuations, conveyed so much in the language of humility and love, that the motto of his works might well be—“his words are smoother than oil, and yet be they very swords.” It is not in vindication of their character I write;—it is to warn you against his corruptions of the word of God.

As a specimen of these corruptions, and as connected with the error I have been last combating, I call your attention to Mr F.’s doctrine of an *evangelical law*, which he asserts his perfect christian perfectly fulfils—while he is forced to acknowledge that the most advanced christian in the present state falls short of the obedience which the stricter moral law of God required. The latter he calls—“the Creator’s anti-evangelical—paradisaical law of innocence,” and the former—“a *milder* law—adapted to our present state and circumstances,”—the evangelical, mediatorial, and remedying law of our Redeemer.” (Fletcher’s last Cheek, &c. pag. 15, 16. & passim. London, printed by R. Hawes, 1775.) Now I am bold to say, that this is the language of a man ignorant both of the divine *law* and of the *gospel*, though it is a language perfectly corresponding with the popular divinity current in the world. Speak to the most openly carnal professor of christianity, and you will find that, without ever having read Mr F.’s works, his system is the same—only in a less pious garb. He will admit that, according to the *strict* and perfect law of God, he is a sinner—to be sure, like the rest of the world; and that judged by it he would be condemned;—though he thinks it would be rather hard that he should be judged by so severe a rule. But he comforts himself with the consideration, that Christ has introduced “a *milder* law, *adapted to our present state and circumstances*”; and that, under this remedial law,

his deviations from the former are rather to be reckoned innocent *infirmitiess*, than damning sins.

But be assured, Brethren, there never did, nor ever will proceed from God, any moral law, but one, which is *immutable* and *perfect* like himself, "holy, just, and good." However variously promulgated, the spirit of it has ever been comprised in these two precepts, in which the Lord Jesus summed it up—"Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Sin is the transgression of the law;" not, as Mr Fletcher says, (Last Check, &c. p. 14.) of "a divine law,"—varying according to the various circumstances of men;—but of that one—unchangeable law of the one—unchangeable God, from the curse of which Christ has redeemed his people, and of which he is "the end," or accomplishment, "for righteousness to every one that believeth."

What does Mr. F. mean by calling this law of God "*anti-evangelical*?" It contains not, indeed, the Gospel: but, blessed be God! it is not *against* the Gospel. "Is the law against the promises of God? God forbid!" It would truly be against such a Gospel as Mr. F. contends for: but that only proves that the system he contends for "is not the Gospel." Christ came, "not to destroy the law, but to fulfil." "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid!" exclaims the apostle—"nay, we establish the law." But certainly Christ would have come to destroy the law, and would have made it void through faith, if he had come to supersede that law by the introduction of *another* and a *milder* law.

I am willing to hope that Mr. F. saw not the consequences involved in his principles; but this does not lessen the danger of his principles, nor the importance of pointing out those consequences to you. And that his name has been so canonized among you, as to make it be considered little short

of sacrilege, to oppose his principles,—this, while it renders the attempt a more ungrateful task, renders it at the same time the more necessary.

Forgetting then, for a moment, that the principle is his, look, I beseech you, at one of the monstrous consequences, with which it is pregnant: A *milder* law! What is the plain English of that? A law less perfect, i. e. a law imperfect, i. e. a law which *sanc-tions sin*. If the Creator gave one law, and that law was but “holy, just, and good,”—what must be inferred from the assertion that the Redeemer has introduced *another* and a *milder* law, but that the nature of moral good and evil is *changed*, or that the new law is neither holy, just, nor good?

But these are not the only moral laws, which Mr. F. has introduced. As his *evangelical* law is the standard to which a christian is to be perfectly conformed, in order to be his *perfect christian*; so he has another, a yet *milder* law, which was the standard of a *Jew's* perfection; and another *milder* still, which is the standard of a *Gentile's* perfection. (See his *Last Check*, page 67.) And why he should have stopped there, and left out *Turks*, *Infidels*, and *Heretics*,—I cannot see. But indeed I view his system as such a corrupt jumble of Law and Gospel, as is neither Gospel nor Law, but alike contrary to every essential principle of both; while it is so flattering to the carnal pride and self-righteousness of men, that I do not wonder it has attracted so many followers.—Truly, Brethren, I do not wish to offend or irritate you, by speaking thus plainly: but I remember what St. Paul says, on the supposition that even “an angel from Heaven should preach another gospel, than that which he preached;” and I think it inconsistent with the allegiance we owe to our one *Lord* and *Master*, to hold the person of any man in such admiration, as to be deterred, by respect for his name, from the vindication of divine truth.

Error is not only a very prolific, but a very inconsistent thing: and among the inconsistencies, in

which you have been involved by embracing this error, that has long seemed to me of glaring magnitude,—that while you hold this deliverance from the inward being of all sin, before death, to be essentially necessary as a preparation for heaven, many of you, notwithstanding, profess to enjoy strong confidence, lively peace, and often ecstatic joy, before you profess to have attained that deliverance. Now with what consistency can a man rejoice, in that state, in which he professes to believe that if he died, he would be damned? Uncertain of the moment that will launch me into the eternal world, into an eternity of happiness or woe,—can I feel well-founded peace, while I believe that I am unprepared for an eternity of happiness—in a condition, in which, if death were to overtake me, I *could not* be saved? Such, according to your system, is the condition of every christian who has not arrived at this perfection. Comparatively few of the body (though alas! these few are too many) profess to have arrived at it: yet you all commonly talk of high enjoyment. You will join with me, and justly, in lamenting the carnal security of common worldly professors, who speak peace to themselves, while they are ready to perish. But however awful their state, they are more *consistent* than you: for they flatter themselves that they *may* be saved as they are. The system you profess teaches that, even after having believed with the heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, you *cannot* be saved, but must perish for ever, unless a further work be wrought in you before death, to which you give the name of perfect sanctification: and yet without this change, multitudes among you talk highly indeed of the peace which they enjoy, and the transports which they feel. The truth of this observation will appear to those who do not know you personally, from a perusal of any among the number of biographical accounts, which you have published. Now I own I can no more reconcile this your conduct to reason, than I can reconcile that your system to scripture.

For my own part, I am persuaded, that the real believer, from the moment he is made a partaker of that precious faith, by which (receiving the record of God concerning his Son) he "flies for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him in the Lord Jesus Christ," is as truly prepared for death as ever he can be. Death is reckoned up, along with life and things present and things to come, among the "all things" that are *his*. Having "come to Christ that he may have life," he is not cast out by him, but is received. (John vi. 37.) Being received by Christ, he is *in him*, a member of his mystical body. Being in Christ, he has passed from death unto life, from darkness to light, from a state of condemnation and wrath and distance, as an alien, to a state of acceptance and justification and nearness to God, as a child by adoption and grace. He is justified; he is sanctified; and if he were that moment to be called out of the world, he would "die in the Lord," in whom he is, and inherit the blessing which is pronounced on such.—As to the noise which Mr. F. makes about our holding—what he chooses to call the doctrine of a "death-purgatory,"—because we hold that the believer will not bring with him into the next world any of that fleshly nature, against which he has to contend during his continuance in this;—I shall only say that it is one of those arts of unfair subtlety, which he employs for perplexing the minds of his readers, and prejudicing them against those whom he opposed; while I believe he knew well, that the men, whom he opposed, were as far as himself, from attributing to death any part of that work of salvation, which wholly belongs to Christ.

Permit me now to remonstrate with you briefly, on some of your errors (as I conceive) in the doctrine of a sinner's *justification*. The *thing* is of so great importance, that a misapplication of the *word* cannot but be attended with danger. According to your language, we are to understand by the *justification* of a sinner, his obtaining a certain sudden feeling

in his mind of divine peace and joy. Those who get this, you call *justified*; those who have not got it, you pronounce to be in an unjustified state. And if I ask most of you, upon what ground you think you are justified—that your sins are pardoned, and your persons accepted in the sight of God,—you would tell me of a certain day, and hour, and moment, when (as you call it) you got *the peace*;—you would tell me of the distressing agonies which preceded it, of the joyful emotions which succeeded it, and of the words of scripture which accompanied it, as if spoken to you with an audible voice. Now I tell you freely that any of you, who possess no better nor surer ground for your confidence than this, are resting your confidence upon a ground, which is indeed most precarious and unscriptural. They who know any thing of the effects of *imagination*, must know that all this *may be* nothing more than the effects of an imagination, heated by the expectation of such a feeling, by the earnestness with which you are taught to lash your minds up to the pursuit of it, and by the various accounts you have heard of similar instantaneous impulses on the minds of others. God forbid, therefore, that the Christian's hope and confidence should rest on a basis, so uncertain in its nature as this.

Some of you will be ready to conclude me an enemy to spiritual and experimental religion, because I oppose the favorite current in which your experience runs. But indeed they mistake. I am persuaded that there is no real Christianity, but what is the work of the spirit of God; and that work is certainly a matter of experience, from first to last. But you appear to me greatly to mistake the nature of the work of the Spirit, as described in the scriptures. It is not a work by which any *new revelation* is now to be made to individuals; but a work by which they are made to discern, to believe, and to receive the revelation *already* made, and recorded in the word of God. Each of you is taught to look for a

divine revelation to himself, of that which is nowhere declared in scripture,—that *his* sins are pardoned, that *his* person is accepted; and to build his persuasion of the truth of this, not upon any thing declared in scripture, but upon the strength of the sudden feeling with which it has been impressed on his mind. Here is *enthusiasm* indeed; and while I know that the unbelieving world will give the name of enthusiasm, to what is most scriptural and important,—for “the things of the spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man,”—I know at the same time that there is such an evil as real *enthusiasm*; and that we are exposed to it, as soon as ever we quit the *word of God*, as the one standard of our faith and of our practice.

This instance of it in your society, I consider as productive of consequences the most dangerous. It tends to puff up many with presumptuous confidence and delusive hopes:—it tends to weigh down others, whose consciences are more tender, while their fancies are less warm, with as unwarrantable despondency. It tends to turn aside the minds of all, from the *one* and only *sure* foundation for a sinner’s confidence, which the scriptures reveal—the Lord Jesus Christ, who is “the end of the law for *righteousness*, to every one that believeth.” Believing on him with the heart, trusting in him as he is exhibited in the Gospel—the Saviour of *his people from their sins*,—the scriptures warrant me to trust in him with the fullest confidence;—to trust in him as my *righteousness* and strength;—and to know that eternal life is mine, as “the *gift of God in Him*:”—and this, without any supplementary revelation, or new voice from Heaven, to announce to me that I am justified. A voice indeed from Heaven, there is; but it is in the *word of God*, which through all its sacred pages, in the Old Testament and in the New, in the law, by the Prophets, and by the Apostles, gives the divine testimony to the Son of God and man, as the only—the all-sufficient—and the faithful Saviour of all, who

believe upon his name. By that precious faith of Him the christian is called to walk,—not by sight—not by sense—not by feelings.

This faith, indeed, is productive of feelings the most blessed : but these feelings are not to be put into its place, nor into his ; as you confound them, when you give the name of *justification* to a supposed sensation of it. Peace, and joy, and love are among its heavenly fruits ; and they will abound, according as the root of faith, whence they spring, is progressively invigorated. In the infancy of faith, before the believer is yet well acquainted with the “ rock of his salvation,” or sees clearly the way in which he is to walk, these fruits are proportionably weak : though there is often, at this period, a natural movement of the animal affections, by the new objects about which they are exercised, which exhibits such a false luxuriance, as is mistaken for a real growth of heavenly tempers. But to represent these real tempers as starting up on a sudden, into their most strong and lively exercise, at the period when faith is most weak,—in its first communication to the heart as a grain of mustard seed,—this is contrary to the view of their connexion with faith as the principle from which they spring.—And to tell a sinner, that he must feel this sudden gust of peace and joy, before he can trust that he is “ accepted in the beloved,” is to lead him to look for the fruit before the tree is planted ; and to substitute a spurious peace and joy springing from a spurious faith, for that genuine peace and joy, which are the fruits of genuine faith.

If you ask me, “ are all then alike warranted to trust in Christ ? ”—I answer freely—yes ;—all to whom the word of salvation is sent, without exception and without distinction, are *by this word* not only warranted, but called and commanded, to trust in him for that salvation of which he is the only author. All indeed *will not* obey the Gospel :—none will but those to whom it is “ given to believe,”—to whom the gospel “ comes not in word only, but

also in demonstration and in power." But the unbelief of others is their great sin, which it could not be, if they were not warranted and commanded to believe: and they die in their sins, not because they had no sufficient warrant to trust in Christ for salvation, but because through the wickedness of their hearts they would not come to him that they might have life, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves;—either atheistically indifferent about their state as sinners against God, or proudly endeavouring to recommend themselves to his favour. Such may *talk* of trusting in Christ for salvation, while they either mean nothing by *salvation*, but an impunity in walking after the flesh; or mean nothing by *trusting in him*, but an expectation that, if they acquit themselves sufficiently in getting some preparation or fitness for him he will receive them. But they alike disbelieve the Gospel; and whatever form their unbelief assume,—whether the gross form of sensual indulgence or the sober garb of seriousness and zeal about self-devised religion, it will alike prove their condemnation, and alike evinces that they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

Indeed, Brethren, there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner's justification and salvation, which the Gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which *seems* most like it; than there is between the latter and any—the most avowedly infidel system—upon which the most profane and irreligious proceed. Examine the two last, in the circumstances which seem the most remote from each other; and you will find the professors of both agree in this essential character:—the language of both is—"Do this and thou shalt live;" they only differ with respect to the degree and quantity of the work, which is to be done, in order to acceptance with God and eternal life.—The profane infidel will say—be honest, or honourable,—and do no hurt to any one, unless to yourself,—or if in the violence

of natural passions, which you cannot control, you should do some hurt in the world, make amends for it by your generosity and the goodness of your heart ; then fear not ;—if there be a God he cannot condemn you for following the dictates of nature. The zealous religionist, shocked at his profaneness, will assign a much stricter task ;—and along with a greater quantity of *doing*, will point you to the *aids*, which he supposes the Gospel offers to the *well disposed*, and a faithful improvement of which is to help out your natural insufficiency. To a more regulated outward conduct, he will direct you to add a number of religious forms ; and with religious forms, he will call you to combine various religious affections and religious feelings. He perhaps introduces Christ, in the beginning of his system, as giving all men a sufficiency of *materials* to set them up in this work—if they choose,—and as helping in the work any who are well-disposed to exert themselves diligently in it. And perhaps he introduces Christ, at the end of his system, as making up, by his merits or his mercy, the deficiencies of their doings,—provided these deficiencies have not been too great.

The systems of these two men admit of various modifications, and various shades of colouring, according to the various fancies and tastes of men : but they both alike—and all the intermediate systems by which the chasm between these is filled up—go upon this principle, that a sinner must obtain justification in the sight of God, by *something* that he is to *do*. And a man is not a believer in the Gospel, because he thinks that Christ has either lessened the quantity of work to be done, or meets a sinner half-way in doing it.—The GOSPEL stands removed from, and in opposition to *all such* systems. Its language is, —not—“ do this and thou shalt live,”—but “ *believe* on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved.”—It reveals HIM, as having “ come into the world to *save sinners*”—even the chief of sinners ;—as “ giving eternal life to all that the Father hath given

him."—It reveals a view of GOD, the possibility of which could not have been conceived by any creature without his revelation ; as a "*just God, and the justifier of the ungodly,*"—justifying them freely by his grace, not for any works of righteousness great or small, which they have done, or can ever do,—and yet in a way which displays the glories of his *righteousness* and *truth*, no less than riches of his *mercy* and *love* :—giving his own Son to "make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness,—to bear the sins of many, in his own body on the cross,—to become a curse for them, and the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that *believeth.*"

The word of God acknowledges but one work, by *doing* which any creature can be justified before God ;—that is the performance of what his LAW commands—his one perfect law, holy and righteous and good. The word of God, therefore, acknowledges no work, by *doing* which a sinner (a transgressor of that law) can be justified : and the question, how a sinner can become righteous in the sight of God must remain unanswerable either from the law, or from any discoveries of human wisdom. The glorious GOSPEL of GOD our SAVIOUR, pervading his whole word, gives the only satisfactory answer to that question : and reveals such a "*righteousness of God,*" or such a way in which God justifies sinners, as magnifies the law which they have violated,—as is infinitely glorifying to him, and unspeakably blessed for them. To know this, is to be wise to salvation ; but the knowledge of it is given from above. It is "*foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know*" it. All the corruptions of his fallen nature lead him to reject the testimony : and it is just as much rejected by multitudes who call and think themselves Christians, as by avowed infidels. The doctrine of a sinner's justification as the *free gift of God* in CHRIST JESUS, to every one that *believeth*, is the essential difference of the Gosp-

pel, that distinguishes it from all human systems and all other ways of justification which men propose to themselves, are alike dishonourable to God, —alike opposed to the truth of his word,—and alike ruinous to those who walk in them. This doctrine, as LUTHER justly observed, is the turning-point of a standing or falling church; and it may as truly be said to be the turning-point of *true* or *false religion*. I dwell the longer on this subject, and urge it the more earnestly on your attention, because an error *here* is indeed a fundamental error; and how far the doctrine of *justification* is held in your Society, so as to involve a multitude of errors,—judge ye.

Let me add a few words on your abuse of two other expressions of weighty moment—*repentance*, and *conviction* of sin. By the latter, you seem to understand the terror of an alarmed conscience:—by the former, that sorrow for sin and solicitude about the things of salvation, which arise from such an alarm, before there is any work of saving faith in the heart. Now I conceive that *such* a sorrow for sin may be most poignant, and *such* a solicitude about eternal things most lively, where there is no real *repentance*:—and that the conscience may be ever so much *terrified*, without true *conviction* of sin.

That *repentance*, which is unto life, is not any thing preceding faith, or unconnected with it; but is that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to believe with the heart on the Son of God. It is then, and then alone, that we sorrow for sin after a godly manner: it is then, and then alone, that we discern, and are truly engaged by the one thing needful. Any thing called *repentance*, while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*, is but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift; is but a refined form of that fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its workings is evil—“only evil continually:” and I would no more be warranted in

him."—It reveals a view of GOD, the possibility of which could not have been conceived by any creature without his revelation ; as a "*just God, and the justifier of the ungodly,*"—justifying them freely by his grace, not for any works of righteousness great or small, which they have done, or can ever do,—and yet in a way which displays the glories of his *righteousness* and *truth*, no less than riches of his *mercy* and *love* :—giving his own Son to "make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness,—to bear the sins of many, in his own body on the cross,—to become a curse for them, and the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that *believeth.*"

The word of God acknowledges but one work, by *doing* which any creature can be justified before God ;—that is the performance of what his LAW commands—his one perfect law, holy and righteous and good. The word of God, therefore, acknowledges no work, by *doing* which a sinner (a transgressor of that law) can be justified : and the question, how a sinner can become righteous in the sight of God must remain unanswered either from the law, or from any discoveries of human wisdom. The glorious GOSPEL of GOD our SAVIOUR, pervading his whole word, gives the only satisfactory answer to that question : and reveals such a "*righteousness of God,*" or such a way in which God justifies sinners, as magnifies the law which they have violated,—as is infinitely glorifying to him, and unspeakably blessed for them. To know this, is to be wise to salvation ; but the knowledge of it is given from above. It is "*foolishness to the natural man, neither can he know*" it. All the corruptions of his fallen nature lead him to reject the testimony : and it is just as much rejected by multitudes who call and think themselves Christians, as by avowed infidels. The doctrine of a sinner's justification as the *free gift of God* in CHRIST JESUS, to every one that *believeth*, is the essential difference of the Gof-

pel, that distinguishes it from all human systems and all other ways of justification which men propose to themselves, are alike dishonourable to God, —alike opposed to the truth of his word,—and alike ruinous to those who walk in them. This doctrine, as LUTHER justly observed, is the turning-point of a standing or falling church; and it may as truly be said to be the turning-point of *true* or *false religion*. I dwell the longer on this subject, and urge it the more earnestly on your attention, because an error *here* is indeed a fundamental error; and how far the doctrine of *justification* is held in your Society, so as to involve a multitude of errors,—judge ye.

Let me add a few words on your abuse of two other expressions of weighty moment—*repentance*, and *conviction* of sin. By the latter, you seem to understand the terror of an alarmed conscience:—by the former, that sorrow for sin and solicitude about the things of salvation, which arise from such an alarm, before there is any work of saving faith in the heart. Now I conceive that *such* a sorrow for sin may be most poignant, and *such* a solicitude about eternal things most lively, where there is no real *repentance*:—and that the conscience may be ever so much *terrified*, without true *conviction* of sin.

That *repentance*, which is unto life, is not any thing preceding faith, or unconnected with it; but is that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to believe with the heart on the Son of God. It is then, and then alone, that we sorrow for sin after a godly manner: it is then, and then alone, that we discern, and are truly engaged by the one thing needful. Any thing called *repentance*, while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*, is but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift; is but a refined form of that fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its workings is evil—“only evil continually:” and I would no more be warranted in

Let those who are spiritual among you, consider how many evils have arisen from dealing with every man who has a sudden impulse of alarm in his conscience, as if he were therefore *convinced of sin*: and with every man who, after such an alarm, has a sudden gust of joy, as if he were therefore *justified*.

But, methinks, I hear the cry of prejudice again—"you are a *Calvinist*, and a *Calvinist* is an *Antinomian*, and every thing that is bad;—in principle at least—if not in practice."—I am aware that it is the great labour of your teachers, to instil this prejudice into your minds. But, Brethren, if even a *Calvinist* say what is true, is truth to be rejected because it comes from a *Calvinist*? Examine what I have written, upon its own intrinsic merits, by the unerring rule of God's word—*independent* of the enquiry, what the writer is.—To that enquiry, however, I shall now proceed to say a few words.

I cannot prevent others from calling me a *Calvinist*; but it is a name that I never wish to assume:—and this, not from any cowardly desire to conceal my views of divine truth,—for I would rejoice to proclaim them to the world,—but because I see that the scriptures positively testify against the practice of christians distinguishing themselves, by the names of *human* leaders. If I were to chuse any man, by whose name I would distinguish myself, I would be apt to select **PAUL**, and call myself a *paulite*. But against this, **PAUL** himself would protest: and shall I call myself a disciple of **CALVIN**?

" But we call you a *Calvinist*, because your views of scripture are the same with *Calvin's*."—I do not know that. In some points, I believe they are; in some, I believe they are not. At any rate, it is not from *Calvin's* works I have learned them:—for of his works, which I have long possessed in nine ponderous folios, I have never read nine pages, and probably never will. I must decline the admission of any name, which would involve me in the necessity of maintaining all that *Calvin* has written;

nor would I ever wish to descend from the high character of “a servant of the LORD JESUS CHRIST,” to that of a champion for the opinions of any man; —much less of one, whose conduct I think, in one instance very reprehensible,—however its guilt may be extenuated by the consideration of the age in which he lived.

“ But you evade the point. We call you a *Calvinist*, because you hold the shocking doctrines of “*election* and the *final perseverance of the saints*.” Brethren, I wish not to evade this point; but I wish to clear the ground: and when charges of error are brought against me, I think it desirable that they should be stated definitely, and not in vague and ambiguous terms. I do hold these doctrines, which you call shocking; and I am sure *Calvin* was not the first who held them, nor the only one of his time. If I mistake not, they were among the doctrines maintained by all the reformers, against the Popish Church: but, what is infinitely more important, they are doctrines as clearly revealed, as any others in scripture.

Yet I do not wonder that they excite such indignant clamour; and are so decried by many, who make a high religious profession. While all the truths of God are offensive to that *carnal mind*, which is *enmity against Him*; those which assert his sovereignty, and declare the salvation of a sinner to be the act of his mere *grace*,—“Having mercy on whom he will have mercy,” and setting aside all those distinctions between man and man, which we naturally expect to be grounds of God’s discriminating favour,—those truths are peculiarly hostile to the pride and atheism of our natural hearts, and have ever been, the objects of the peculiar resentment of the world. It appears that those hated views were what stirred up the murderous principle in **CAIN**: and that the same, after a lapse of four thousand years, were what sometimes converted the admiration, with which the Jews regarded our Lord, into the utmost violence

of persecuting rage—(see Luke iv. 22—29). The same opposition to these humbling views, has made some professors, of the present day, hardly avow—that they would sooner go to hell, than be saved in a way of such mere mercy: and has made others boldly deny the *mercy* of God, even in sending his Son into the world to save sinners;—asserting that if the Divine Being had not appointed this way of salvation, he would have been bound in justice to provide some other. But—“the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the **LORD** alone shall be exalted.” Isa. ii. 17.—It is an awful woe, which is denounced against him that “*Striveth with his Maker*” (Isa. xlvi. 9.): and I am persuaded that all, who are saved, must be saved from that proud rebelliousness of heart, and be subdued to a thankful acquiescence in the revealed way of salvation—glad to be saved by mere *mercy*—and convinced that, if it were not *mere* mercy, they could not be saved at all.

And now, Brethren, let me come closer, on this question, to you, who profess to be at peace with God—to have been translated from darkness into light—and to be living members of Christ’s mystical body. Not to call in question, at present, the reality of what you profess,—I would observe that it is by a great *change* you have been brought into your present state. You “were once darkness:”—whence is it, that you “are now light in the Lord?” The real christian will not hesitate to give the glory of this change to Him, “who commanded the light to shineth out of darkness,”—and, by the same almighty power, “shineth into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ.”—You were once “dead in trespasses and sins,” and “children of wrath, even as others.” Whence is it that you are now alive unto God, “and have received the adoption of children?” The real christian will not hesitate to ascribe this work to Him, who “quickeneth the dead, and calleth things that

are not as though they were :”—whose divine power executes what he has declared in his “ exceeding great and precious promises.”

Well, Brethren ; others around you are in darkness, children of disobedience, going astray like lost sheep : “ What maketh you to differ” from them ? The scriptural answer to that question includes all that I believe concerning God’s *electing love* and *distinguishing grace* : and it is in connexion with that question, that I always desire to view these doctrines.

Do you say, or think, that the difference has been produced wholly or in part by any superiority of worth—of wisdom—or of power, in you ?—or—what amounts to the same thing—by your having been not quite so sinful—so unworthy, blind, and impotent—as they ? In that case, whatever profession you make—however specious and however high,—taking the word of God for my rule, I must consider you as yet in darkness, ignorant of yourselves and of God—of the Law and of the Gospel. And unless that *free grace* and *sovereign mercy*, which you oppose, intersere for your deliverance,—you will perish under the just consequences of your pride and unbelief. I am sure that, were it not for that *grace* and *mercy*, I would still be like you—fighting against God. While I warn you, therefore, of your sin and danger, it is not with proud and uncharitable censoriousness,—but with tenderness of humble concern for you ; and with hope also—not that you can be saved in your present unbelief—but that God will yet mercifully give you to believe, and graciously guide you into that only way of salvation, which He has appointed and revealed.

But if you answer the question I have proposed, as I am sure every real christian will answer it ;—if you cordially and fully ascribe the difference between you and others, who are yet out of the way, to Him who hath said—“ I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out,” (Ezek. xxxiv. 11.) to that “ God who is rich in mercy,” and to “ his great

love, wherewith he loved you, even when you were dead in sins" (Eph. ii. 4.) ;—in that case, Brethren, I will only say, that you are in this matter as much Calvinists as myself; and I think I have found among you, from time to time, a few who were so, without knowing it: and with such I would never waste time in arguing about phrases.

It is but an evasion to say, that "others *might* repent and believe to the saving of their souls, *if they would* : but they resist the offered grace of God." This is such trifling with words, that I might pass it by without observation, were it not a current argument among you, and employed for supporting many awful errors. In reply then to this evasion, let me ask again—how comes it that you have been made willing—that you no longer (if indeed it be so) resist the offers of divine grace, as you formerly did yourselves, and as others still do? Is it that you were naturally less unwilling than they? or that your resistance was more easily subdued from being less stubborn? or is it that God in mercy *gave* you repentance, that is a new mind, and a new will, "making you willing in the day of his power?"

But the terms of the argument seem to imply an idea, that God only gives to sinners certain *offers of* blessings, and certain assistance towards obtaining them ;—*leaving it to* sinners *themselves* whether they *will* ultimately accept those offers, and avail themselves of that assistance. Those, who know what human nature is, will be certain that, if this were the case, not one sinner ever would be saved, but all would go on to the end—wilfully indeed but infallibly—in the broad way of impenitence and unbelief, which leadeth to destruction. Does it then, Brethren, depend upon the will of fallen man, whether any seed shall serve the Redeemer or not? When the Lord Jesus Christ died to "bring many sons unto glory," is it left to the discretion of sinners, whether "he shall see of the travail of his soul," or not? When it is declared that "the gates of hell shall not

prevail against his church," is the certainty of this suspended upon the supposed good dispositions of the sons of men? Away with such a thought!

But I repeat it, that it is mere trifling with words to say, that sinners *might* do so and so *if they would*. It is to say no more, than that they might if they might, and they would if they would. The want of a *will* towards God, and the dominion of a *will* that is opposite to God,—this is what constitutes the evil of their nature; and makes it *impossible* for any man to see the kingdom of God, without being "born again"—without being created anew. And it is awfully striking to the enlightened mind, to observe those who deny the existence of that evil, at the same time affording the most decisive evidences of its reigning power,—in their neglect of the great salvation, and opposition to the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour.

Nor let any of you urge that objection, that those views of man's natural corruption, and God's sovereign and efficacious grace, reduce men to mere *machines*. There is this essential difference between them and machines, and it is enough for us to know:—men are *voluntary* agents, both in the state of nature, and under grace. They *act* according to their reigning *dispositions* and *will*: while machines are destitute of thought and volition. I freely admit that the course of men's conduct will, in some sense be determined by the character of the will, that reigns in them, as necessarily, as if they were machines. As long as that will is corrupt and opposite to God, their course will be evil, while they "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" and this, as *infallibly* as "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." And when He who alone can create anew, gives the sinner a new mind and a new spirit—i. e. a new *will*—when the kingdom of God is set up in the sinner's heart, and he is delivered from the dominion of the flesh;—a correspondent change will as *certainly* take place in his course, as a good

tree will certainly bring forth good fruit. Now if you mean by the *free will* and *free agency* of men, about which your writers often make so much noise, only that he is a *voluntary* agent, and (like such) necessarily regulated by his reigning *mind* and *will*, you mean what, I believe, none of those, whom your writers oppose, ever thought of denying. But while I admit this, I must urge that observation of our Lord—"if the Son of God make you *free*, ye shall be *free* indeed." In our natural corrupt state, though *voluntary* agents, we are the "slaves of sin," because our will is evil: and from the *liberty* (so called) of being *left to ourselves* and our natural wills, every believer will, above all things, desire to be delivered.

Upon that old objection, retailed in various forms, that "if men be so corrupt, that they have not of themselves the ability of doing good, they then cannot be *blamed* for doing evil;"—I shall only observe that, if this objection have any force, it must follow from it that, the more diabolically *wicked* any *voluntary* agent is, the more *innocent* will he be. A creature is certainly not a subject of blame, if he be not a *voluntary* agent: and if he be, and his *will* and *disposition* be altogether wicked, he is certainly incapable of doing any thing good; and according to your argument, is therefore not to be *blamed* for doing evil. A consequence—so monstrous—may convince you that the argument, from which it would necessarily follow, is of no force.

But if any press the objection, and presumptuously demand—"why doth God yet find fault? why hath he made me thus? and who hath resisted his will?"—I know not any answer more seasonable, than that of the Apostle—"nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" It is more seasonable to warn such an objector, that unless he repent and be converted, he will perish, and be convinced too late that he is *justly* an object of condemnation;—than

to follow him into the depths of metaphysical subtleties.

I regret, Brethren, that I have had occasion to touch upon any such bewildering topic. But your writers have handled them so frequently--so dogmatically--and, in my mind, so weakly and erroneously--that I have thought it expedient to go thus far in the subject; and to offer you some of the simplest principles, which I think may be useful clues, for bringing you out of their intricacies. This is all the use I ever desire to make of metaphysics;--not to go myself or lead others, into such endless speculations; but (if it may be) to lead out those who have been lost in them. They are full of dangerous shoals and whirlpools; and men of the most penetrating and cultivated minds have found depths in them, which they could not sound: while it too often happens, that the most illiterate among you are taught to think themselves qualified for the task; and just learn enough of false metaphysics, to be "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

But I have avowed not only my belief of God's electing love--that he "hath chosen his people in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4.); not only my belief of his effectual grace in their calling--"that whom he doth predestinate, them he also calleth"--calleth "with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given them in Christ Jesus before the world began;" (Rom. viii. 30. & 2 Tim. i. 9.)--but I have also avowed my belief of the *final perseverance* of the Saints--that "of all who have been given unto Christ he will lose none--that his sheep shall never perish--but shall be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory." (John vi. 39. x. 28. xvii. 24.)--Upon this topic much need not here be said: it is inseparably connected and interwoven with the preceding.--The salvation of a sinner is from first to last the work of God, and "his work is perfect;"

nor will "he forsake the work of his own hands." If I believed not that HE is "the keeper of Israel"—that HE "keepeth the feet of his saints,"—I would not merely with you talk doubtfully about their perseverance unto the end, but I would be certain that not one of them would persevere. We know from scripture that "whoso persevereth unto the end the same shall be saved," and none else; for "if any man draw back, my soul saith the Lord shall have no pleasure in him." The only question then between us is,—how it comes that those who are saved do persevere unto the end; whether it be by their own sufficiency, or by GOD's grace.

They but raise a dust to obscure the question, who represent it as relating to the importance and necessity of our *faithfully* "cleaving with purpose of heart unto the Lord." It is agreed that the characters of those who shall be with him in his heavenly kingdom are "chosen and called and *faithful*:"—but the question is whether this character belongs to them as part of his work "who worketh in us both to will and to do," or as the work of their own power.

Some of you who will read these pages, would probably not be backward to declare your expectation of getting to heaven. I call on you, Brethren, to consider on what that expectation is founded. Few perhaps will avow that it is founded on themselves: but if founded upon God, recollect that he works in his people according to his revealed word. What mean you then by denying his *word*, which warrants his believing people to trust in him, that he "will guide them by his counsel and afterwards receive them to his glory,"—while at the same time you talk of trusting in him for the *work*?

But I dare say that some of you ere now have been ready to cry out—as I know is too often the language of your preachers and your writers,—"this man conceals the cloven foot of *reprobation*

behind the fair cloke of election and final perseverance: remove the cloke, and you will see behind it, in the representation which he gives of God—a gloomy and cruel tyrant, arbitrarily saving a few and damning a multitude.”—Ah, Brethren, these are rash and awful expressions—though but a small specimen of the language in which some in your Society have indulged themselves without fear, in order to excite in the people a horror of *Calvinism* and *Calvinists*.—The observations that I shall make on the objection must be but few and brief; but I hope will be made with more attention to the word of God, and more reverence for his sacred name, than the objection is often stated with.

I would observe, in the first place, (and the observation, though apparently verbal, is not unimportant), that the term *reprobate*, where it occurs in scripture, is used in a signification altogether different from that, in which you and some others apply it. It is employed simply to denote a thing or person which cannot *stand the test*, by which we try whether it be really what it professes to be. See for instance Jer. vi. 30. & 2 Cor. xiii. 5. According to the language of scripture, every sinner is a *reprobate*, till he is a genuine believer: for till then, tried by the word of God, he will be found wanting. If some name therefore be thought necessary as a watch-word of alarm against *Calvinism*, invent some other term, and forbear to pervert and misapply the language of the Bible.

I would observe, in the next place, that I no more than you believe that the destruction of those who finally perish is the act of God, except so far as it is the execution of his righteous sentence against their wilful sin. Their sin (the cause of their destruction) is their own; while the salvation of those who are saved from their sin is his.

Again I would observe, that as to the number of those who shall be saved, I know not any difference between John Wesley and John Calvin—if

the former did not hold the unscriptural doctrine of *universal restoration*. All I know from the Bible upon the subject (and I know nothing of it but from the Bible) is this—that it will be “a great multitude which no man can number;”—while all in the countless multitude will ascribe their “salvation unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb.”

Whether *their* salvation be the fruit of their own deserts, or the work of the Redeemer’s grace; the condemnation of those who perish will be, in either case alike, the righteous consequence of their own sin. How then, Brethren, do I represent the Almighty as cruel, in maintaining that “the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.”

I would observe, in the last place, that to charge God with cruelty for not extending the same grace and saving mercy to others, is in effect to deny the existence of his *mercy* altogether. The very idea of mercy is that it is *gratuitous*. That is not the gift of mercy which may not *justly* be withheld; and that cannot *justly* be withheld, which it would be cruelty to withhold. So that if you look with a more enlightened eye at the objection, which is so clamorously and rashly put forward by some of your society, you will find that it resolves itself into this—that God cannot *justly* punish sin in any of his creatures with everlasting destruction from his presence.—Does that assertion shock you? It will shock every sober and truly awakened mind. Then if God be “just when he judgeth,” he is merciful when he saveth a sinner: and if the salvation of any be of his *mere mercy*, who is the proud worm that will dare to arraign him of cruelty for not saving all?

Do you ask *why* God does not extend his saving mercy to more? Many such questions I know may be rashly started, and as rashly determined by poor purblind creatures: But, dear Brethren, let me beseech you to observe that the scriptures have been given to “make us wise unto salvation;” not to fa-

tisfy presumptuous curiosity: and I do discern as striking characters of divine wisdom, marking the word of God, in what is concealed, as in what it reveals. Every thing that a sinner can need to be informed of for his own salvation is discovered as with a sun-beam. Am I a sinner? the word of God testifies against my sin, warns me of its consequences, but at the same time declares that God "has no pleasure in the death of a sinner," and proclaims a "great salvation." Do I ask where is that salvation?—the word of God points to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." To him Moses in the law, to him all the prophets, to him all the apostles bear witness, that "whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." In the word of God I hear the voice of his invitation—"whosoever will let him come:" I hear the voice of his promise—"him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Do I reject the revealed counsel of God against myself, and stand enquiring into his everlasting purposes concerning me,—enquiring whether I am among the number of his elect or not? Impenetrable darkness graciously rests upon the question; but the warning voice is heard—"except ye repent ye shall perish." Do I believe, and turning to the Lord, enquire—"what wouldst thou have me to do?" the word of God abounds with every gracious consolation for my encouragement, with every gracious admonition for my safety, with every gracious instruction for my guidance, with all that I need to know, for maintaining a happy and holy walk with the God of my salvation.

Do I begin to enquire about others? Every needful and profitable question is resolved for the regulation of my conduct and tempers towards them, but every question unprofitable and vain is stopped—with "what is that to thee?" Such glimpses of discovery are afforded into the dealings of God even with other orders of intelligent creatures, besides

those of the human race, as are calculated for our profit, for our admonition, and for the enlargement of our minds with grander views of his majesty and his works. But we may ever estimate the clearness, with which we may expect to find any question resolved in the word of God, by the immediate importance of that question to the enquirer, and the *usefulness* of the information which he seeks.—Alas! what a different book would the Bible be, if systematic divines—if uninspired men of any sect or party—had the compilation of it!

Wherefore do I urge those remarks? To call your attention to that solemn declaration of our Lord—“ whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” The little child may ask many questions of the tender parent. Every kind and degree of information which the parent gives, the child receives with implicit credence; and where information is withheld; acquiesces with implicit submission in the parent’s wisdom.—Let us—“ GO, AND DO LIKEWISE.”

* * * *Alterations from the first Edition.*

Page 9, line 29, of *many* among you,—*for*, of *most* among you.

Page 33, line 37, and all *other* ways—*for*, all *the* ways.

A

SERIES OF LETTERS

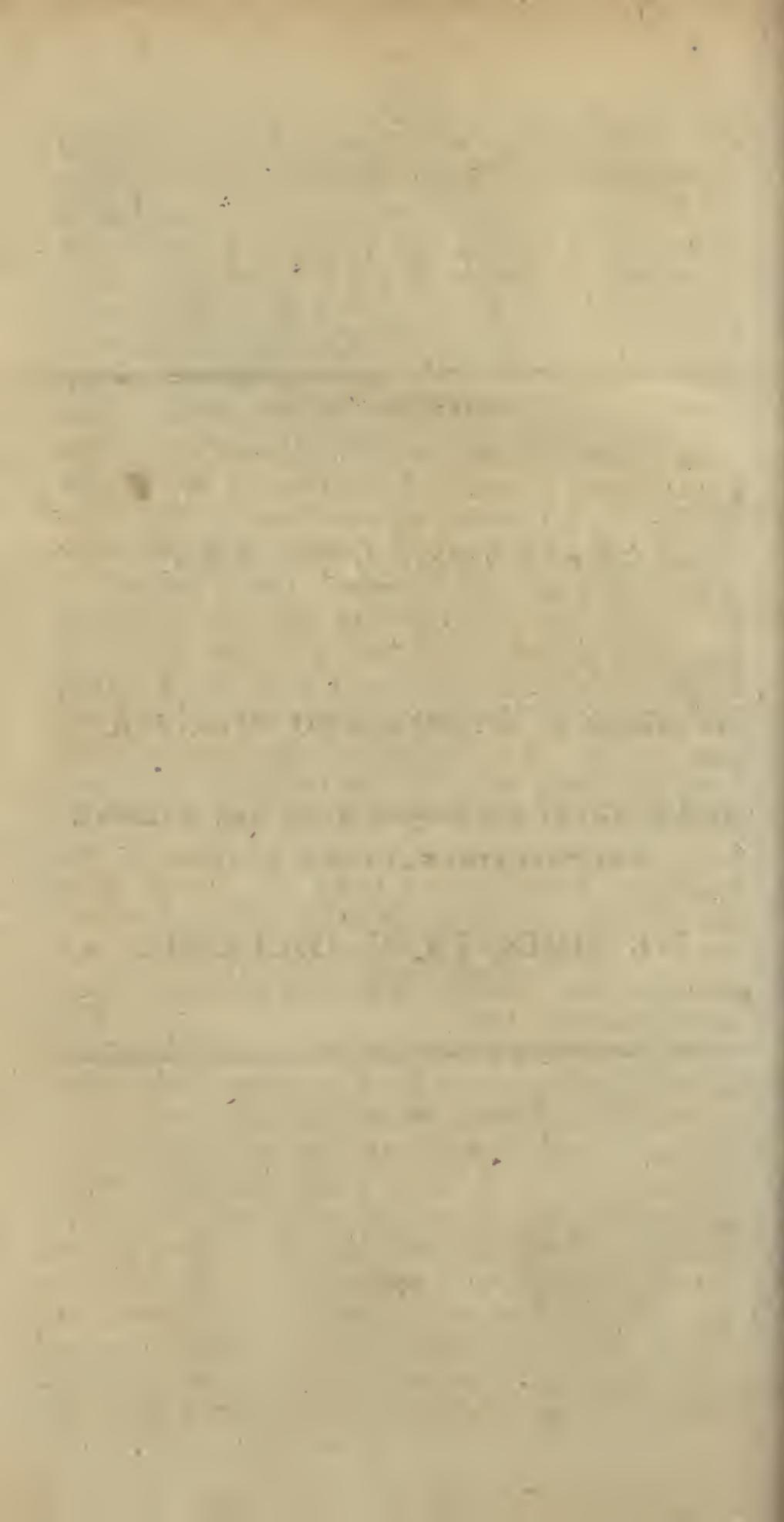
TO

ALEXANDER KNOX, ESQ. M. R. I. A.

OCCASIONED BY HIS REMARKS ON THE AUTHOR'S
EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS TO THE

METHODISTS OF IRELAND.

E



LETTER I.

ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is very contrary to my own expectation, that I am obliged to publish my answer to Mr. Knox's Remarks in a series of separate letters. But I find that, if I should reply to the whole of his Pamphlet at once, as I originally intended, I must either treat the subject more superficially than its importance demands; or else must allow a longer interval to elapse before publication than I think expedient, and produce in the end a larger work, than many readers would be willing either to purchase or peruse.

In the letter, which I now send into public, and hope to follow shortly by a second, the reader will perceive in what manner I aim at handling the controversy. I wish to clear away all disputes about the characters of men, and about modes of expression: in order to bring forward and discuss with plainness the infinitely important *principles*, which are concerned in it.

In one respect, I can confidently predict the issue of the discussion; and the Vindicator of the reputation of the Methodists may look at it with satisfaction. Their reputation in the world will rise, in proportion as the attention of the public is directed to the differences between them and me. The world will progressively discover—what I intimated in more than one passage of my address—that its creed approaches much nearer to the system of Methodism, than to that called Calvinistic; and will therefore become much more favourably disposed to the sentiments of a body, which it finds strenuous in main-

taining opinions that are generally current in the world.

Impressed with the certainty of this result, I must be either strangely fond of reproach, or strongly persuaded of the importance of the truths for which I contend, in wishing to continue the contest. The former, I know, some are ready to suppose, who cannot believe the latter. However that be, I confess that I view all the reproach which can be heaped upon me as a matter of perfect indifference, in comparison to the object of being blessed to win one soul—either in or out of the Methodist Society—to the knowledge of that *glorious Gospel*, which is the wisdom and the power of God to them that believe.

I beseech the reader to give a serious consideration to the topics handled in the following pages; and to excuse the unadorned garb in which they appear, for the sake of their intrinsic importance.

J. W.

Dec. 23d. 1802.



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sense none excluded from it—in another sense all real Arminians.—The essential character of the Gospel.—A Christian cannot escape the charge of illiberality.

SIR,

I CANNOT, like you, commence by expressing either reluctance or regret in taking up my pen, to reply to your remarks on my Expostulatory Address to the Methodists of Ireland. It was not without the most serious consideration that I wrote that Address; and, after the most serious and repeated consideration, I do not regret having brought into discussion the topics, which are handled in it. Nor is it with reluctance that I find myself called on, by your Remarks, to continue the discussion of them. I was well aware that I should be so called on by some respondent; and surely were I to select an antagonist, I could not choose any one, with whom I should more gladly enter the field, than a gentleman of cultivated mind,—capable of understanding the force of an argument,—disposed to acknowledge it when perceived,—not unexperienced in the general subjects which come into debate,—and towards whom I cannot be supposed to harbour any sentiments contrary to those of personal regard.

In avowing the satisfaction with which I meet any antagonist, and especially such an one as you, I know that I express a feeling very different from that, which many possess, who view the contest. I know that many, even of those who profess to think with me on the leading subjects discussed in my Address, are yet concerned that I have brought them into public agitation. Some of them think it imprudent in *me*, to involve myself in the odium of such a controversy; and others think that all controversy about matters of religion, between professors of religion, is to be deprecated. The latter sentiment

alone is worth consideration. Allow me, Sir, to premise a few observations upon it; because I know that it is generally prevalent, and appears indeed in more than one passage of your letter, while I think it most deeply erroneous.

The sentiment against which I protest, (protest at least in the latitude in which it is commonly put forward) seems to me to originate—partly in a natural insensibility to the *importance* of divine truths,—and partly in a prejudice occasioned by the *manner*, in which religious controversy has been too often handled. If the scriptures contain a divine revelation, the matters which they reveal cannot be unimportant; and if they be important, the discussion of them must be desirable, for the purpose of ascertaining the real import of the revelation, and of vindicating its truths against every opposing error. Accordingly we find, in all ages of the church, that the professors who manifest the grossest indifference to the revealed truths of God, are those who are most forward to decry every attempt to examine or assert them: and that as a sense of their importance has at any time been excited in any country, there has appeared with it a corresponding zeal to maintain them against all adversaries.

Indeed it is among the peremptory precepts of Christianity to “hold fast the form of sound words,” (2 Timothy i. 13.) to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints,” (Jude 3.) ; and this—as appears from the following verse—not merely against those who are without the pale of the visible Church, but against false professors who are within it. See also the praise and the reproof, that are dispensed to the seven Churches of Asia, (Rev. ii. iii.) according as they faithfully discharged this duty, or treacherously neglected it.

Neither is the nature of the duty changed, nor its importance diminished, by the numbers who—under the semblance of performing it—have either contended for the doctrines of men as the truths of God,

or in vindicating the latter—have departed from the spirit, in which Christians are called to maintain the contest. That it is a nice and trying thing to discharge the duty aright, I readily acknowledge, and desire to remember: but if this were a reason for shrinking from christian duty, there is not one that I would ever attempt; for I know there is not one that I can perform aright, but as I am enabled to perform it in a spirit not my own.

But will those, who are so anxious that we should not disturb the repose of the *Christian World* (as it is called) with religious controversy, prevail on that world to give up their opposition to the truths of God's word? NO:—the peace they would promote is a treacherous peace. The adversary is not idle, even when he propagates his errors most quietly, or under the most specious form: and it becomes those who “know the truth,” not to be imposed on by his wiles, but to advance the standard of the Gospel, and maintain “the good fight of faith.” There must be a controversy between divine truth and human error, as long as there are any men in the world who oppose that truth: and those who desire Christians to give up the controversy, do but ask them to surrender their Lord's cause to their enemies.

Many *professors* of his name will be angry with those who disturb them, by the introduction of such topics. They would rather have their unbelieving minds left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of carnal repose. ‘They could do well enough,’ as they say, ‘and be good Christians enough, without being troubled with the truths of scripture. The Bible to be sure, is all true; but then there are a great many things in it, which we had better let alone. Those who mind them too much are apt to get enthusiastic, and to become strange kind of people, thinking and acting very differently from the rest of the world; and they can see no use in contending about these *speculative* matters.’—Such

sage observations are very common, and very natural from those, who really do not believe what the scriptures declare; but at the same time desire to sail smoothly down the current of the world, in a reputable profession of Christianity. But they must excuse those, who do believe the truths of God's word, for asserting and vindicating them, though it should disturb their quiet.—How far these preliminary observations are applicable to the present occasion, will appear more clearly as I proceed in my reply.

You take up your pen, Sir, under a most mistaken idea, which you carry with you through the whole of your letter. You commence by speaking of "*charges*," which I have made against the methodists; and by which you conceive I have "*attacked*" their body. To repel those charges, and "*vindicate*" them from this supposed attack, evidently is your great object from first to last. In this you appear to know little of my object in addressing them; and you invite me to a field, into which I have no disposition to follow you. My object in writing was not to accuse the Methodists at the bar of the public, nor to attack them as those whom I wanted to put down: but to give them an admonition which I knew to be needful; and to testify to them, for their profit, against evils in their practice, and errors in their principles, the existence of which your pamphlet says nothing to disprove. Your object being to *vindicate* them at the bar of the public, you zealously endeavour to convince the world that my admonition was not needed. But I have no anxiety to prove to the world that it was. That is a question, in which my character alone for propriety of conduct is concerned, on the one side; and on the other, their reputation among men: and I view all such questions as too unimportant to deserve discussion.

Your flattering remarks, of course, will be much more grateful to the Methodists, than my faithful

Address: and the only view in which I regret the publication of your remarks, is, as it tends to shut their ears against the voice of salutary admonition; —to which, without your assistance, many of them would have been sufficiently deaf. It is very natural to us (but a very bad part of our nature) to regard as an *enemy* the man who *tells us the truth*, (Gal. iv. 16.); and it is for you seriously to consider, how far the fundamental principle, upon which you took up your pen, countenances that evil, in representing a testimony against pernicious errors, as the attack of an enemy. Still I am not without hope that some of that body—even some of those among them, who are at present much incensed against the monitor—will eventually be benefited by the admonition; by being excited to examine for themselves into the nature of several practices and opinions, which have hitherto passed current among them, under the stamp of human authority. And if this effect be produced in any degree, I trust I shall be very indifferent to the determination which the world may give to that question—whether I had sufficient cause, or not, to address the Methodists as I did. The *world* is a bad judge of any matters relative to Christianity: and while I desire to be kept open to instruction in the Scriptures—through whatever instrument it may be conveyed,—it is by the Scriptures, and not by the judgment of the world, that I desire to have my opinions formed, and my conduct regulated.

You assign, Sir, one reason for remarking on my address, the cogency of which I am indeed most ready to admit. You think that I have “given some very erroneous views of certain scripture doctrines, which seem to you to be pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences.” Thinking so, the apology at the close of your pamphlet, for taking up this part of the subject is altogether superfluous. No Christian man *steps beyond his line*, in maintaining the truths of scripture, according to his ability, against all who corrupt or oppose them. That this

is the business of priests and theologians alone, is a papistical idea, which is only calculated to hoodwink the eyes of the people, and to lead them blindfold after blind guides. And however useful some learning—rightly applied—may be, for determining the precise meaning of particular passages in scripture, yet (blessed be God) the leading doctrines of scripture are as open to every English reader, as to the most profound scholar.

Here therefore you have undertaken an office, in which, if you have failed, your failure is not to be attributed to the want of human learning; and an office which I shall at all times be glad to see others undertake. If they succeed in the execution of it, they will be instrumental in propagating the knowledge of scripture doctrines: if, in the attempt, they bring forward mistaken views of scripture,—they will afford an opportunity to others of combating errors, which are naturally rooted in the human mind, and are generally prevalent—even when they are not publicly maintained. And in this view I confess I look with more satisfaction at your “theological remarks” than at all the rest of your pamphlet. In the observations which I have to offer upon other parts, I shall have continual need to guard against wasting my time, or the time of my readers, upon topics of no eternal—that is of no essential—importance. But when I come to your *theological remarks*, after separating from them questions which might issue only in *verbal* controversy, I am certain of the importance of the subject, and certain of the one rule, which is to guide me in the discussion of it.

I have already intimated that, in replying to your remarks on what you call my “charges against the Methodists,” I have no intention of going into the proof of any facts to which I have alluded in my admonitions. But be assured you greatly mistake, when you intimate that my pamphlet “would probably never have been published,” had they abstained from opposition against certain persons, whom

you suppose me “concerned for.” In truth, Sir, there are no persons for whom I am concerned—in the sense in which you appear to use the word; and so far from that opposition having given occasion to my Address, I am not conscious that it was even a concurring cause; tho’ I thought it expedient (having taken up my pen) to call their attention to that opposition, as marked with the characters of a party-spirit.

You intimate that the blame of this opposition ought to be at least divided—that it is but party against party; and adduce in evidence my entering as you say “into a *detailed* exposure of every thing” I deem faulty in methodism.—Here, Sir, it is more important to clear the meaning of those terms—*party* and *party-spirit*, than to prove that I entered into no such *detail* as you impute to me, nor into any *exposure* of faults in the Methodists, but what was necessary to call their attention to the evils, which I wished to mark.

A party, Sir, is a good or bad thing, according as it is engaged in a good or bad cause, and promotes it by good or bad means. The world may give the name of a *party* to any or to all Christians, as combined together to promote the cause of Christ’s Kingdom, by the propagation of his truth; and may give the name of *party-spirit* to the zeal of Christians in pursuing those objects. But the things cease not to be good, because they are marked with a bad name. Now if I, in my Address to the Methodists, opposed any point of Christian truth, or any instance of Christian practice, which they observe; I there must plead guilty of what deserves a worse name than *party-spirit*; must plead guilty of having taken part (whether intentionally or not) with the enemies of the true God. And if you or any one can point out such an instance in my Address, I trust I shall have grace to acknowledge my fault with shame, and to regard the person who detects it as my best friend.

And again, if in that opposition of the Methodists, against the exertions of other denominations of Christians in this island, they are opposing persons who are not really engaged in the cause of Christ, or opposing any errors in their doctrine, or evils in their practice,—I will freely admit that their opposition deserves a much better name than that of *party-spirit* :—it is Christian fidelity. That “*they deem*,” the opinions of those, whom they oppose, peculiarly pernicious—is indeed, as you observe, no justification of their entering into a party-war. But let me say for the Methodists—hypothetically—more than you seem disposed to say: that if the opinions of those persons be unscriptural, they are pernicious; and that would amply justify the Methodists in opposing them by the word of truth, while nothing can justify them in employing any other weapons. I have warned the Methodists to take heed that their opposition was marked with these characters, which alone can vindicate it from the charge of *party-zeal* of the *worst* kind; and I am glad of the opportunity you have afforded me of tracing those characters more distinctly.

But besides those two great parties, of which I have taken notice in my Address, as the only parties I desire to acknowledge, and the contest between whom I can never desire to see abated, as long as there are any men on earth who oppose the cause of Christ in opposing the truths of his gospel:—there have been too long subordinate parties among those, who are alike on the Lord’s side, and too much of *party-zeal* manifested by them for their subordinate differences, and the several peculiarities of forms and modes, by which they are distinguished. That such distinguishing peculiarities should exist, I think is unavoidable in the present imperfect state: and I think many wise reasons appear for the providential permission of them. But while they continue to exist, they destroy not the unity of the Christian church; which consists not in a unity of modes and

forms, but in having one faith, one Lord, one baptism of his Spirit, and one God and Father of all.

I have therefore long lamented, that they should have so much estranged different Christians from each other, excited mutual jealousy, and prevented that manifestation of the unity of all believers, which is one of the circumstances, by which they ought to let their light shine in the world. I have long lamented that Christians should waste so much of their zeal about those distinguishing peculiarities, which cannot be essential to the Christian church, because they are borrowed from characters not common to all its real members. All such zeal also is *party. zeal* of a bad kind, though not so bad as the former ; and I did, in my Address, intimate my satisfaction at the rapid decrease of that spirit in the present day, manifested by the growing union of Christians of various outward churches—co-operating cordially to promote the common cause of their common Lord. I look with satisfaction at that union, because it obviously has no bond but that in which all Christians are agreed—the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour :—for the persons, who are thus acting in concert for the propagation of it, retain, and are likely to retain, all their former diversity of sentiments about modes and forms. And I did drop a word of remonstrance to the Methodists upon that jealousy, which I know many of them have manifested against this Evangelical Union. Nor do I regret the remonstrance ; for it was needed : but the proof I decline entering into ; my object being to convince—not to *convict* them.

But here, Sir, let me freely say—that the only Methodists, whom I could wish to see coming forward to join that union, are those who do *not* for themselves adopt those “*favourite doctrines*” of methodism, a zeal for which you seem to think so harmless. That there are such in the Society—I have avowed my opinion. I only regret that such should countenance the fundamental errors of the method-

the folly of the Methodists in not
allowing the members. If they
were to do so, it would

distic system by not protesting against them: for that some of the errors of it (as standing opposed to the freedom, sovereignty, and efficaciousness of the grace of God in the salvation of his people) are so *fundamental*, that no man is a believer of the Gospel who really adopts them for himself—uncharitable as the declaration may appear to you—I cannot but testify. Nor can I be so certain that any of those who *profess* the methodistic system are real Christians, as I must be, that several of the tenets of that system are *Anti-christian*. The Scripture assures me of the latter; but no where of the former. And with those, who really do not believe the Gospel of the grace of God, believers of that Gospel cannot co-operate in Christian union.

You express your conviction, Sir, that “ what well-disposed Arminians aim at will then only be secured, when they keep the controversial sword within its sheath, and confine themselves strictly to what is practical.” I quote this passage not to avail myself of the concession, which would appear to be implied in it, that their opinions will not stand the test of a close examination by the word of God; —but to protest against that prevalent, but most erroneous sentiment—that Christian practice ever can be separated from Christian doctrine.—Throughout Scripture these two things appear indissolubly connected. All the most practical directions to the people of God are immediately derived, in Scripture, from the views which they have received of Him, his grace, and his salvation; however an unbelieving world may decry the importance of those views as *speculative*. In Scripture the only principle, which is represented as working by love, is *faith*—or “ the belief of the *truth*.” “ By the word of *truth*,” are believers begotten unto God (James i. 18.); through the same *truth* are they sanctified. (John xvii. 17, 19.) Nay, it is declared that “ this is life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,” (John xvii. 3.) And on the other hand, to

walk in darkness—*to believe a lie*—*to know not God*—are phrases synonymous with a course of evil and ungodly practice. Let no Christians, therefore, for a moment, admit the idea of “confining themselves to what is practical,” to the neglect or exclusion of the doctrines of the Gospel. I do not say, Sir, that you intended to convey such an idea: but it is so generally current in the word, and *seems* to be so countenanced by your expression, that I have thought it not inexpedient to bear this testimony against it. I shall indeed have occasion to examine it more at large hereafter.

But you seem to intimate, that the points of divine truth—at issue between the Methodists and those who are called Calvinists—ought by both to be laid aside as incomprehensibly mysterious, as “gulphs—where” (you say) “St. Paul himself confesses that he found no bottom.” I could wish, Sir, that you had referred to the passage in the Apostle’s writings, which you have in view. Is it possible that you allude to that exclamation of the Apostle’s (Rom. xi. 33.)? “O! the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Why—in that very passage the Apostle has been asserting most plainly the dealings of God, as working all things after the counsel of his own will, for the purpose of magnifying the sovereignty of his grace and the riches of his mercy, in saving sinners both of Jews and Gentiles; and then breaks out into believing admiration at the view of the divine wisdom in this procedure. And shall his admiration of its wisdom be employed to call in question the certainty—of what he has so expressly declared? Shall the great assertor of the doctrines of free grace be quoted, as leaving them in dark uncertainty?—If I have conjectured right, as to the passage to which your allude, I think your candour will acknowledge, upon examining it, that it has nothing to do with the purpose for which you employed it.—But

allow me to say a few words more upon the fallacious argument—no longer now as yours—but as too commonly employed by others, to excuse their unbelieving rejection of what God has declared in his word.

‘These things’ (they cry) ‘are abstruse and incomprehensible;—no one can understand them: therefore let us not hear any more of them.’ Often have I known the most avowed infidels to shelter themselves in this refuge of lies, from the first principles of revealed truth:—and often professors of every shade and degree, who while they own the divine authority of the Bible in a mass, reject its truths in detail. Now I will readily concede to those objectors two points:—the one, that there are various questions *connected* with all the truths revealed in the Scriptures, which our understandings cannot fathom;—the other, that no man can believe what he cannot understand. But what then? Do the Scriptures call us to believe what is unintelligible? No—they *plainly declare* the truths, which men are required to *believe*: and let these objectors shew me that opinion which is not intelligibly declared in the word of God, and I will shew them that opinion, the belief of which (whether it be true or false) cannot be essential to salvation.

But are the doctrines of the free grace and electing love of God, which Arminians *systematically* reject—are they such? No;—they are throughout the Scriptures revealed in language so plain, that the most illiterate, who believe them, understand its meaning. But, “why,” said Christ of old to the unbelieving Jews, “why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word.” The unbelief of the heart—indisposed to receive the truth—is a veil upon the mind, and blinds the eyes of the understanding.

Or—are those doctrines—so plainly revealed—to be rejected as uncertain mysteries, because other questions about them, which the presumptuous cu-

riosity of man suggests, are left unrevealed in the word of God and therefore baffle the utmost stretch of the human understanding? As well might I reject all the evidence of my senses about natural objects, because so many topics of enquiry concerning them may be started, which I never can resolve. As well might I call in question the certainty of my own existence, because I cannot understand *how* I exist. Let us have done then, with the talk of laying aside, as *unintelligible*, any of the truths revealed in scripture; and let those who will talk of laying them aside, as *unimportant*, avow that they lay aside their Bibles.

You think that "Christian charity is violated by thus judging of men's hearts," as I seem to you to have done, in admonishing the Methodists against the prevalence of a party spirit in their body. Sir, it is a very small matter whether I am thought uncharitable or not; but it is a matter of serious importance to vindicate that scriptural term—CHARITY—from the perversion of its meaning, which this and other passages of your letter more than countenance. And it is the more important, because similar misapplications of the term are so common, and pregnant with consequences so awful—tending to harden men against the force of divine truth, and to lull them in carnal security.

What is the cry of the unbelieving world, when warned of the evil of their ways and the evil of their hearts? 'O! be not so *uncharitable*. It belongs ' to God alone to judge our hearts.' As if God had not pronounced in his word the awful characters of the heart of fallen man; or as if it were a christian duty to disbelieve what he declares, and to think well of that, which he testifies against as evil. You need not be informed, Sir, that the word translated *Charity* means neither more nor less than—LOVE; and that it is *faith* that "worketh by love." Let not that love, therefore, be set in opposition to the pa-

rent from which it springs ; as it is, when a "judgment of *charity*" is made synonymous with—a favourable opinion of men's state and hearts, whether that opinion be regulated by the Scriptures of God or not.

The word of truth warrants me not in thinking well of the human heart at any time,—neither of my own heart, nor of the hearts of others ; and the same word teaches me to consider the corruption of that heart as the one fruitful source of every evil, both in the tempers and conduct of men, (Mat. xv. 18, 19.) The word of truth admits but two principles of moral good or evil in man, and plainly characterizes their distinct fruits ;—the *fleshy* or *natural mind* of fallen man—the fruitful source of evil and nothing but evil continually,—and the *new mind* of the spirit in believers—the fruit of which is altogether good. When I see any of the fruits of the flesh, even in believers, I know from Scripture that they cannot proceed from the spirit, no more than a good tree can bring forth evil fruit ; and the truest christian *charity*—or *love*—may call on me, not only to testify against the outward evils which I discern, but to admonish them of the inward principle of evil from which these proceed.

Look, Sir, again at those fruits, to which I called the attention of the Methodists, in that passage where you think I have " violated christian charity ;"—fruits, the existence of which in their society you have not attempted to deny, though I believe you are little acquainted with the extent to which they exist :—and perhaps you will find reason to alter your opinion, that I have there " resolved doubtful conduct into its worst possible cause." The fruits are not *doubtfully* evil : and a scriptural believer can therefore have no doubt whence they spring ; and knows that the worst which can be said of that source must fall short of expressing its real corruption.

You think that I would have resolved their con-

duct into a more favourable cause, if I had imputed it to their real attachment to the favourite doctrines of the Arminian system—as opposed to the Calvinistic.—Viewing, as I do, these doctrines as anti-christian, and opposite to the truth of God's word, I am glad to have room to *hope* that, in many of them, this conduct originates in a different cause:—that they adopt the unscriptural peculiarities of Mr. Wesley's and Mr. Fletcher's system, rather in name than in reality; and that they oppose those who hold and declare a simpler Gospel—rather from the false views of the doctrines, called Calvinistic, which are sedulously obtruded on their minds, by misrepresentations of what Calvinists hold,—than from a real opposition to the truth. Yet even this supposition does not render it unnecessary to admonish them of the evil—of taking up such hasty and unfounded prejudices: much less does it vindicate the means, which many in the Methodist Society have employed for opposing those who are the objects of these prejudices. But where any of them are prompted to this opposition by a *real* adoption of the peculiarities of Arminianism,—I must (however it may shock you as a violation of christian charity) warn such, that they are opposing the truths of God in the blindness of their minds,—that unless they repent, they will perish in their unbelief,—and that the persuasion they have of being right, cannot exempt them from condemnation.

‘What!’—some one will exclaim—‘what more can be required from any man, than that he should be *sincerely* convinced that what he believes is true, and act accordingly? And is it not a breach of *charity* to condemn any, whose hearts are thus *sincere*? Is not this (in the language of the charming poet) *to deal damnation round the land*—*on each we judge God's foe?*’ Well then;—if this objection be founded in truth, let us shut our Bibles for ever. The objection, in fact, is founded

in disbelief of what the Bible declares; and was very suitable in the mouth of an infidel poet, who plainly intimates that the worshippers of the heathen Jove and of the true JEHOVAH, who has made himself known in the scriptures, differ from each other in little more than a name. My Bible tells me, that *who so believeth the Gospel*—that is, the glad tidings which it brings of salvation for lost sinners—*shall be saved*; and that *who so believeth not the record that God hath given of his Son*, is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him. But if that objection be true, then whatever a man believes—provided he is *sincere* in believing it—(and I am sure I know not well what the *inf sincere* believing of any thing is, it is so like *disbelieving*)—it is of no essential consequence, so his conduct be good. But let christians never countenance that *sincerity*, which is nothing but *sincere* pride of heart, and *sincere* enmity against the true God: for such are the corruptions of the human heart, which make a sinner reject the Gospel, and *love darkness rather than light*. Let not christians ever countenance that conduct as good, which springs not from a mind *obedient to the faith*;—which is the conduct of men yet in that state, in which the scriptures declare, that they *cannot please God*. Let not christians ever be deterred, by the outcry made in favour of an *infidel charity*, from testifying against principles so mischievous, from warning the unbelieving world of their danger. This is one of the prime duties of *christian charity*, or love.

I know, Sir, that these views include one of the peculiar offences of the Cross of Christ. *The offence of the Cross* would long ago have *ceased*, if Christ were preached as a Saviour—in whom men might believe (to be sure) if they pleased, and be the better for it,—but whose testimony they might also reject without ruin. The infidel world would contentedly bear such a Gospel as this, and give its ad-

vocates credit for much *charity*. They would contentedly suffer us to take our own way, if we would only give them to understand—that they might safely take theirs. And we find, in fact, that those professors of christianity who hold such a Gospel, or countenance it by their indifference to divine truth, go very quietly through the world, and are much respected by the world. But such professors of christianity are but professors: *they are of the world*, and therefore *the world loves its own*. But far be that carnal policy from christians, which would recommend to the world something under the name of a Gospel, by stripping the Gospel of its essential principles—because they are offensive.

So far as any really give up or deny those essential principles—(and all those principles are essential to the Gospel, which affect the *one foundation* of a sinner's hope towards God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead)—I trust I shall ever address them,—whether they bear the name of Christians or bear it not,—as infidels, and as opposers of the revealed truths of scripture; while I desire to address them with that tenderness of concern which springs from a view of their danger,—and with that lowness of mind, which springs from a persuasion that it is by *grace*—by *free-grace* alone—I am made to differ from them. Such I know will be very angry, at not finding me as ready to compliment them with the surrender of the divine truths which they dislike, as they would be to return the compliment in that case to me. This they call *charity* ;—this *thinking well* of every one, or of a great many, whatever they believe, and however they stand disposed to the Gospel. And they find that they possess so much of this charity, that they commonly *think very well* of themselves for being so very charitable; and if there be any one for whom they can have no charity, it is the man who has not quite so much of *this* charity—this *infidel charity*—as themselves.—They think

it very hard that such a man should disturb them, and invade their characters, by testifying against their unbelief. But, indeed, Sir, if charity be such a thing as they mean by this term,—to have the most charity, a man needs only to be the greatest infidel in the world. It is very awful to pervert any part of scripture, and very awful to apply, what is spoken in scripture of charity, to such indifference or opposition to the truths of scripture.

It may perhaps excite to consideration some bigots to our established church, to observe how vehemently she protests against such infidel charity in her 18th article.* I mention it only in this view; and not in the vain idea of proving this, or any other part of christian doctrine, by the authority of that or any other church. By the scriptures alone, the doctrines of christianity must be proved. But while some profess themselves favourable to a kind of orthodoxy, because they cannot help seeing that it is patronized by the church;—and others are zealous for the church, who avowedly hate her doctrines,—I confess myself attached to that church, because I see her orthodox—i. e. scriptural—on all the essential parts of christian doctrine. ^{2 But other individuals see things otherwise}

But methinks I hear some one exclaim—‘ Is it not written in scripture—*Charity hopeth all things?*’ and again—*Judge not, that ye be not judged?*—Yes; and again it is written—‘ *Woe unto them, that call evil good, and good evil.*’—In calling us to the exercise of such a charity, as they contend for under the sanction of those much-perverted passages of scripture, they call us to incur the woe, that is denounced in the latter passage. True charity “ hop-

* “ They also are to be held accursed, that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For holy scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.” Articles of the church of England.

eth all things" indeed, all things, that the word of God warrants us to hope for:—but that word warrants us not to hope that any, who die under the power of *unbelief*, will escape the righteous judgment of God; or that any who live under its power, are in a state of acceptance with him. The word of God testifies the contrary; and that faith—which receives the testimony of God's word—must ever regulate the hope of that charity, which springs from it. We may transfer to this the limitation of the apostolical power, mentioned by St. Paul (2 Cor. xiii. 8.), and say,—true charity *can hope nothing against the truth but for the truth.*

And when these men quote that gracious precept of our blessed Lord, "Judge not,"—i. e. presume not to pass a *judicial sentence against* any of your fellow sinners, let them learn from the following clause—"that ye be not judged,"—to interpret the precept better, than they do, when they represent it, as amounting to a prohibition against forming any unfavourable *opinion* of the state or character of other men;—that is, to a prohibition from our Lord against *believing* the most express declarations of his own word.—When our Lord elsewhere (John xii. 47.) says—"If any man hear my words and believe not, I *judge* him not: for I came not to *judge* the world, but to save the world;"—are we to understand him as declaring, that he formed no *unfavourable opinion* of such a man's state!—No;—the next verse, as well as the whole current of his testimony, forbids the supposition. He testified against the children of the world, that their works were evil, and that they had not the love of God in them. But he obviously declares that he came not—(then)—to pass sentence judicially against sinners, but to save even the chief of them.

In the sense, in which that precept—"Judge not"—is commonly quoted, it would be easy to shew, that it was violated continually by all his apostles and prophets; and is utterly inconsistent—not only

with the *belief* of his revealed truth,—but with the discharge of numberless practical *duties*, enjoined on his disciples to the end of the world. But let it suffice to have said this much, in vindication of the real import of these scriptural expressions; which have been so long and so commonly perverted by men, *willingly ignorant* of their meaning, that even more serious and candid enquirers too often fall into the grossest misapplication of them.

But you apprehend that I have, not only violated christian charity, by my admonitions to the Methodists against a party-spirit,—but also given “fresh force to the charges brought by infidels against the propagators of christianity in general”—as “covering with a pretended concern for truth their own desire of unrivalled ascendancy.”—Your remark, Sir, comes to this;—that christians ought not to protest against the unchristian conduct, or tempers, or principles of others, if they also be professing christians, lest the deists—the avowed infidels—should thence borrow an argument against christianity. You see that the remark only needs to be put into plain English, to show its fallacy. It is very true, Sir, that the tribe of deistical writers, abounds in invectives against the professors of christianity,—put forward as if they were charges against christianity itself. And their cause needs such sophistry. But indeed those, who would meet them by a vindication of the professors of christianity, give very undue force to their charges. The only effectual—for the only true—answer to all such objections, is to distinguish between the Gospel and its professors. If the things for which deists censure us be scriptural, they attack an authority higher than that of any man: and I am not afraid of the consequences of their attack. It is the puny effort of a worm to shake the rock of ages: and I know that “whoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken; and on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” But if the matters objected to us by them

have not the authority of scripture, let who will fight for them against the deists:—I trust I will never. I am perswaded that among nominal christians there are numbers of real infidels; and let them employ themselves in fighting with their brethren the deists, about their nominal differences. I desire to maintain the truths of scripture against both; and never to lower the dignity of the matter for which I contend, by involving it in the character or conduct of any mere men. Nor will I ever desire to conceal from the deists, that there is too much of evil in the spirit, and error in the principles of various religionists. But that evil and those errors are not christianity. And I hope to be ready to protest against them, whenever called to it, without the fear of giving infidels any real handle against christianity. Infidels are to be combated,—not by denying or concealing the abuses existing among religionists,—but by opposing those abuses, and shewing that they are opposite to the christianity of the Bible.

You proceed, Sir, to remark on the next instance of a too prevalent party-spirit, upon which I thought it needful to admonish the Methodists;—the predominant eagerness to have numbers added to their own society. I did say that this has long *appeared* to be the principal concern of *most* among them; and I did subjoin in the same paragraph six different evidences of this, which I have long observed in their body. All these evidences, as usual, you overlook in silence; while you are solicitous to vindicate their character, by disputing the fact. You seem also to have altogether forgotten, that the “terms of absolute assertion,” which you think, “scarcely consistent with strict candour,” contain an assertion only of what has long *appeared* to be the principal concern of most among them. For the last fourteen years, though never in their society, I have observed and known many of them, and been acquainted with their proceedings in various parts of Ireland;

—and that such has been the *appearance* presented to my view in a very large majority—(with some blessed exceptions, which in various parts of my address I have rejoiced to acknowledge)—I can say with the strictest candour and with deep regret. However—as it is impossible for me, or any other individual, to have had opportunities of observing an actually *numerical majority* of their members,—although I think that unnecessary to vindicate the terms of my assertion, to any unprejudiced interpreter,—yet I have gladly expunged the offensive term—“most,” and substituted the word—“many”—in the second edition of my address. And be assured, Sir, I would, with much more heart-felt satisfaction, come forward to the public, to testify that the appearances of this—or any other evil upon which I have admonished the Methodists—have ceased, or become less general,—than ever I came forward (as you conceive—to prefer accusations against their body—but as I am conscious) to testify to them against evils, the existence and prevalence of which I know.

But indeed, Sir, I will readily acknowledge, that the unscriptural zeal for *numerous* proselytes to be joined with us in outward church-membership, is an evil by no means peculiar to the Methodists. It is a natural fruit of the *carnal* mind, which has been always looking for some externally attractive circumstances in the Messiah and his Kingdom. Great numbers *professing* the same faith with us, tend to give so much credit and respectability to our cause in the eyes of the world, and to keep us (as it were) so much in countenance, that the flesh—in Calvinistic as well as in Arminian professors—has commonly on this ground been passionately desirous of them. But our Lord’s flock, throughout his word, is addressed as a “little flock,”—a poor—a despised—and an afflicted people;—corresponding in the mean appearance they make on earth with the King of Zion, who was meek and lowly, and in whom there was no beauty seen that the children of the

world could desire. But there is more true glory resting upon ten real believers, found in the faith, and living by the faith of the Son of God,—though reproached and calumniated by the professing and unprofessing world—though a sect “every where spoken against,”—that there is in the most numerous church unsound in the faith,—though consisting of ever so many thousands of professing christians—ever so high in reputation for morality and piety.

We are told in scripture what the glory of the true church is:—“**THY GOD THY GLORY.**” Aye:—He,—her God and her Redeemer—her only Saviour, in whom alone she has righteousness and strength,—He is *her glory*: and she knows him as such; and glorying in him, is enabled to welcome reproach and shame and tribulation for his name’s sake. And just in proportion as any church begins to glory in any thing else, we may name her—**ICHABOD**—“the glory is departed from her,”—however splendid her appearance in the eyes of the world, or in her own. To make christianity *respectable* in the world and *palatable* to the world, has been long attempted; and just in proportion as men pursue the attempt with ardour, they manifest that they have lost sight of the scriptural characters of christianity and of the world:—and in proportion as they seem to succeed in the attempt, they corrupt the **Gospel** of God our Saviour. We find plenty of such Christianity, as men may profess, and even be very zealous about, without losing their *characters* and good name in the world, or *offending* its children: but I desire no further evidence than this, that such christianity is spurious. The mind of the world towards the true Messiah, and his true **Gospel**, is just the same that it was, when that cry was raised—“Crucify him---crucify him;”---and whenever the world seem better disposed to christianity, it is because something under the name is presented to their view, that is not the christianity of the **Gospel**. For the “*offence of the cross*” to unregenerate men has

not ceased, and never can :—and our Lord's word must stand true to the end of the world—“ Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.”

You go on to observe that---in a strict adherence to the discipline of Methodism, I must “ mean to include their injunctions of *morality* and *general piety* :”---and where these things are combined with a strict attendance on *meetings of piety*, you ask, am I ---or “ is any one on earth entitled to pronounce, that such persons are really destitute of christian faith ?” ---Now, Sir, I answer without difficulty, that such persons *may be* really destitute of christian faith ; and may manifest such evidences of infidelity, as will entitle any christian on earth, who observes them, to pronounce that they are so. If the observance of what is called *morality* and *general piety* cannot of themselves constitute a christian character, certainly no attendance on *meetings of piety* can. And that the former cannot, is certain from scripture, and from acknowledged fact. For strict morality—(so called)—and for general piety,—not only some of all denominations of professing christians have been eminent, from the Arminian Methodists to Pelagians of all degrees,—and from them—through all the shades of Arianism—to the thorough-paced Socinian, who considers the bible only as containing a collection of moral and pious precepts—while exemplified in the life of a man,—and regards its revealed truths only as so many *eastern metaphors*, which he may interpret away into any thing or nothing at his pleasure :—not only some of all these have been eminent as moralists and pietists,—but some avowed infidels and heathens also.

In short, Sir, while I know that there may be a kind of morality and a kind of piety, ever so fair and imposing in the sight of men, where there is no christian faith ; I know from my bible, that there can be no true morality or piety—because no real love for man or God—but what springs from the christian

faith. And therefore where infidelity is avowed by rejection of or opposition to the fundamental truths of the Gospel,—believing my bible—I must reject all the nominal morality and piety also of such professors, as spurious. The one only true God makes himself known to us in his word. The man, who rejects his revealed truths, may have a kind of piety ; but the true God is not the object of it, and his piety is no better than that of a heathen. Nor can I doubt that many *pietists*, as well as *moralists*, will be found among the “haters of God,” when I observe the indignation and enmity, that are stirred up in their minds against his attributes and dealings with men, by the proposal of his revealed truths, in which these attributes and dealings are made known. And I do beseech the CHRISTIAN Methodists, who, know and love the name of the Lord,—(for otherwise they would not be Christians)—to attend to the admonition—notwithstanding the advocate who represents it as illiberal ;—and not to be so easily satisfied (as they too commonly have appeared to be) about the state of those, who give in their names to the society ; and not to be so hasty in considering them as in the way of salvation. If they have grace and wisdom from above to exercise more fidelity towards the souls, over whom some of them are called to watch, they may soon discover, from the offence that will be taken, and the opposition that will be made to them, how far some of their people are from obedience to the faith of the Gospel ; and how little acquainted with themselves or with God.

You ask me—whether I am “so thoroughly informed of *all* that such persons say in the language of Methodism, as to be sure that they give no mark of acquaintance with God or with themselves.” Indeed, Sir, it does not require an acquaintance with *all* that any man says, in any language, to mark him unacquainted with God or with himself ; if he be an opposer of the Gospel of the grace of God.

In scripture the power of *unbelief* is synonymous with the power of *darkness*; and the universal character of all by nature is—" alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance* that is in them because of the *blindness* of their hearts." And when any are brought out of that state, it is by God's " shining into their hearts, to give them the *light* of the *knowledge* of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." Then, and not before, they are " children of the light and of the day :"—and then instead of hating the light, which discovers at once their entire vileness and helplessness, and the glory and all-sufficiency of the Saviour they love that light and rejoice in it ;—instead of disputing against the sovereignty and exceeding riches of the grace of God, they prize " the joyful sound" that proclaims these, and abhor themselves especially for their former opposition to it. You ask me—whether *I* am " accustomed to lay no stress whatever on the morality, &c. of my own religious friends."—Extraordinary as the question is, I am glad to answer it. Yes, Sir ;—so great stress, that the man—who does not *shew* his faith *by his works*—I can see no warrant to consider him as a believer ; though the creed that he *professes* to believe were as orthodox as an Apostle's, and his talk as heavenly as an Angel's. And there is no truth of scripture, that I more firmly or explicitly declare,—for there is none more clearly revealed,—than that those who " *say* that they have fellowship with Christ and walk in darkness,—lie." No :—that very " grace of God, that bringeth salvation, teacheth" the objects of it " to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world." " As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." And, " if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his :" and, " the fruit of the spirit is, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fi-

delity, meekness, temperance." And just according as the believer "grows in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"—this fruit will assuredly abound.—Be assured, Sir, my testimony, against those false professors, who "live after the flesh"—in any of its varied forms, while they *say* that they believe the doctrines of grace, is as explicit, and as offensive to some of that description, though Calvinists,—as *any* testimony I have ever borne against those who deny those doctrines. But what then? The latter do not *profess* the faith of the Gospel; the former shew contrary to their profession, that they do not *possess* it. The *avowed unbelief* of the latter proves their most specious morality to be but "dead works,"—as not springing from faith; and the open immorality of the former (and I reckon under this head any of the allowed workings of the flesh enumerated by the Apostle—Gal. v. 19,—21.—though some of them may be indulged with very little discredit even in the religious world)—proves that their *professional faith* is vain, as not "working by love." I pray God to keep me testifying alike against the *infidelity* of both.

You ask me—whether "merely being an Arminian forfeits all right to a *judgment of charity*?"—Let us have done, Sir, with that expression. My judgment, or opinion, both of my own state and the state of others, must be regulated by *truth*—by scripture truth,—not by my wishes, nor by what I might hope to be true, if I set aside the declarations of God's word. Being an Arminian excludes not a man from being the object of charity—or love—in its various exercises: neither does his being a Turk or an Infidel exclude him. Neither do I conceive—(as I have before observed)—that making a general *profession* of Arminian doctrine, precludes a hope, that the man is a real believer of the Gospel. But I am as sure, that a man's being *really* an Arminian precludes that hope (though

not the hope that he may, through the free grace which he denies, become a believer)—as I am sure that the tenets of Arminianism are contrary to the essential doctrines of the Gospel.

The essential character of the Gospel—(whoever may deny it)—is that of glad tidings of salvation to sinners—wholly lost—who have destroyed themselves ;—of a great salvation, of which the *one* author is that God against whom they have sinned ;—glad tidings of eternal life, as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus to the chief of sinners who *believes* the joyful record ;—and that faith itself his gift, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and hath mercy on whom he will have mercy. I need not spend time to prove to *you*, Sir, that the essential character of Arminianism stands in direct opposition to this, which I maintain to be the essential character of the Gospel. But I shall have occasion, in a subsequent letter, to go into the proof of the assertion, that the Gospel is what I have described. Mean while I say nothing, but what is included in that assertion, in saying that *no real Arminian is a real believer*. This “deliberate opinion,” connected with the avowal that the belief of the Gospel is essential to salvation, will doubtless “bear no appearance of” much “illiberality” to many—to all who do not believe the Gospel. But I remember that passage in the history of our Lord—(Mat. xv. 12, 14.)—“Then came his Disciples and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind.” If all *appearance of illiberality* is to be deprecated, we had better give up our Bibles at once: for be assured, Sir, if *you* hold—with the Bible—that “whosoever believeth not, shall be damned,”—putting what interpretation you please upon the Gospel that is to be believed,—there is a numerous

class, to whom *you* will appear very illiberal ; and many a one will be ready to address you with such a question as you directed to me—" Does merely being a DEIST forfeit all right and title to a judgment of charity ?"

Thus, Sir, I have gone through a little more than the first eight pages of your remarks ; and mean to proceed, in subsequent letters, through the remainder. I trust you will not think any apology needed for the plainness with which I examine the *principles* asserted or countenanced in your pamphlet.—as far as they appear to me to be unscriptural. Many of them are so generally prevalent, and so deeply rooted in our fallen nature, that I am well aware how invidious a task he undertakes, who attempts to oppose them : and aware that, whatever force of argument or clearness of demonstration he employs, the only success he can hope for is—from the divine blessing, rendering the declaration of divine truth effectual to some ; while all other readers will of course assign the victory to his antagonist,—because he contends for principles, which already have possession of their minds.

I am, Sir,

With every sentiment of personal regard,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

LETTER II.

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SIR,

I RESUME my observations on your letter,—according to the plan, which I have already prescribed to myself in my last.

You remark on the passage of my Address, in which I admonish the Methodists against their idolatrous attachment to men, and submission to human authority in matters of religion,—that it is with them as with Calvinists, that “some weak individuals” talk extravagantly about their favourite authors. I am glad of the opportunity, which your remark affords, of extending my admonition. I have met Calvinistic professors, who need it; and I have never forborne to give it, because they were Calvinists.

If we make an idol, it matters little whether it be of gold, or silver, or a bit of wood; and it is pernicious idolatry to put the authority of any men or their writings in that place, which exclusively belongs to the authority of God and his word. I

care not whether the men be Hervey and Romaine, or Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher:—their sentiments and their conduct are not to be the rule of my judgment or practice. The scriptures afford the only standard, by which mine are to be regulated, and theirs are to be tried. And if I even adopt what is right—~~upon the ground of their authority~~, I adopt it in a wrong way; and it becomes in me no better than a human prejudice.

Indeed—the little influence which many of the truths of the Gospel have, upon the hearts or lives of some evangelical professors, is sufficient to shew in what school they have learned them. They may learn of men to talk about them, and express their assent to them, and perhaps, to argue in defence of them: but men cannot bring them to “the knowledge of the truth”—cannot discover to them its glorious reality, nor persuade them of its certainty: and those who learn from no higher teacher remain, therefore, in darkness and in death—even while they are puffed up with a vain conceit of their orthodoxy; and mistake attachment to the tenets of an earthly leader, for a saving acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ.

You ask me, Sir, whether such *extravagant talk*, as “some weak individuals” fall into about their favourite authors, be “ground for a serious charge” of awfully forgetting our Lord’s command—not to call any man master. I answer—without hesitation—that it is. Wherever that evil appears, it is a most *serious* evil and needs a most *serious* admonition: and as arising from ignorance or forgetfulness of our Lord’s command,—I know not any more suitable remedy for the evil, than to urge that divine precept. Surely, Sir, if the Scriptures be given “to make us wise unto salvation,” it cannot be a light matter, or an evil of small magnitude, to form our scheme of salvation, from any other writings.

*Both the author & his wife are dead in 1800
in the course of two or three days. The author
wrote a few lines on the subject of his wife’s
death, & his own death, in his diary.*

Christians, no doubt, who believe the declarations of God's word, will value in their place those authors, who state its truths most clearly, or vindicate them most ably. But let Christians themselves be on their guard here; and on their guard especially with respect to their most favourite authors. All that is true and that is useful in their writings — is in the word of God; and it is *there* unmixed with any error. And one of the surest evidences of our having profited by their writings will be — our returning from them to our Bibles, with an increased relish, and with increased insight into the depths of divine wisdom that are there, and with an increased jealousy to try whatever we meet elsewhere by that unerring standard.

But when professors adopt a human system from human writings — however excellent, — it is no wonder if, when they read their Bibles at all, they read them rather to pick out passages, that appear coincident with the sentiments of their earthly teachers, and to wrest others into a coincidence with them, — than to have their minds subjected to the truths of God. — How far the body of the Methodists need an admonition upon this subject, or only “some weak individuals among them,” I shall not stop to enquire. *If* only the latter, I pray God to make those weak individuals profit by the admonition which I have given them.

You observe, Sir, that “*you* cannot complain of “any such blind partiality” in the Methodists to the names of Wesley and Fletcher: and testify that *you* never “saw the *slightest* reason — to think that any “human writings were treated by them as *paramount to the scriptures*.” I am glad that I have no occasion nor inducement to combat a testimony — so forcible. Let it remain, with its full weight, in the public estimation of their religious character. But it is of importance to call their attention, and that of other professing Christians, to an indication

—which you may possibly have overlooked, in forming your own judgment; and which, if it exist, affords much more than a *slight* reason—to be certain that my admonition on this subject was needful.

Did you ever happen to observe, Sir, that the Methodists universally, as a body, adopt *all* the doctrinal opinions of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher? Did you, for instance, ever happen to meet a Methodist—(perhaps you have met some such solitary individual—but would not such a one be a *rara avis* in their Society?)—who dissent from those writers, on the subject of a *multiplicity of moral laws*, proceeding from God, and differing in degrees of strictness?—or on the subject of a supposed *instantaneous transition*, from a state of conflict against the flesh, to a state in which that corrupt principle ceases to exist, and the man becomes what they call a *perfect Christian*? Do not these and similar tenets *universally* characterize the Methodist society?—Well;—if those tenets be Scriptural, the circumstance of their general adoption by the Methodists certainly does not prove—that they treat the human writings of their leaders as paramount to the Scriptures. But as certainly it does prove this, if those tenets—so strenuously supported in the writings of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher—be contrary to the word of God. And that they are so—that they are contrary to every essential principle of divine truth in the Scriptures,—I am bold to affirm, and am glad to see that you, Sir, in your letter, have not attempted to deny.—Let the Methodists, therefore, look to it whence they have got those opinions: and I admonish the Christians among them—not to be deterred by the weight of the names of men, who have supported those antichristian errors, from examining them by the light of the sacred word.

You add—that *you* never saw the slightest reason to think—“ that they neglect to put the Scrip-

tures into the hands of their converts?" This is a question of fact, to which their own consciences will bear the most conclusive testimony. It is with reluctance I say any thing more upon the subject;—but your vindication of them here obliges me.—It is so forcible that the natural tendency of it is, so to blunt the edge of my—call it what you please—charge or admonition,—as to persuade the Methodists that the Scriptures have not been neglected in their Society; and thus to prevent any reformation of the evil. Indeed—indeed, Sir,—what the public think about the Methodists, I care but little; and let the Methodists have done with caring about it. But let them listen to the voice of truth. The Scriptures have been awfully neglected among them; and the unscriptural opinions, so prevalent in their body are one of the lamentable evidences and effects of this neglect. That they should be neglected by those who make no *serious* profession of Christianity—who profess it only as the *hereditary* religion of their ancestors,—is not wonderful. But indeed it is a wonderful inconsistency, when any make such a profession as all the Methodists do, and yet neglect the Scriptures.

You say they do not neglect to put them into the hands of their converts. Suppose they do not altogether. But which do they put first into their hands—the Bible—or the writings of their human leaders? Of which do they urge the study most?—Mr Wesley himself, in the questions that he prescribes to be asked those, who are proposed as helpers—(Minutes, as quoted in my Expostulatory Address, p. 35.)—never mentions the *Bible*,—though each is to be asked—“Have you read the *plain account*?—the *appeals*? Do you know the *rules*?—of the *society*?—of the *bands*? Have you read—“the *minutes of the conference*?”—&c.—And let it not be said that he took for granted that those persons had read their Bibles. Would to God that none were acting in the capacity of helpers in the

society now, and in various other capacities of most important trust, who have never read their Bibles!

I do not reckon the man to have read his Bible, who has merely read some pet passages of it, that he thinks favour a system which he has swallowed in the lump; nor do I reckon any man to have read his Bible with much profit, who does not habitually search it as the great treasury of all that he needs—for instruction, admonition, and consolation; who does not at least *seek* to regard it habitually as the one standard of his practice and his faith, and the one test by which he will prove every thing. I know the Methodists in general neither use the Scriptures thus, nor are exhorted by their leaders to use them thus:—but, as far as they study them at all, seem rather to study them for the purpose of finding confirmations of their pre-determined system, and sometimes for the purpose of casting a kind of lot—by the help of the first passage, perhaps that may happen to open to their view,—than in the way of a continued, diligent examination of them, for discovering the whole revealed counsel of God.—Nay, Sir, I could name to you a part of the country,—and I fear there are many others,—where till the exertions lately employed by other bodies for disseminating the Scriptures,—there were several Methodist families destitute of a Bible in their houses, though they possessed various pieces of Wesley and of Fletcher. Now a CHRISTIAN man must be indeed as poor as Lazarus, who would be without that inestimable volume—in this country.

But is there not, Sir, an indication of the evil, which I lament,—obvious to every observer,—in the circumstance that—numerous as their “meetings of piety” are—the reading of the Scriptures constitutes not any part of one of them*. I know

* Since this was written, I have heard—and heard with lively satisfaction—that, in one place in the north of Ireland, a meeting has lately been formed among the Metho-

that the *public* reading of them never can supersede the *private* study of them. But indeed when they are *never* read in public, among a body whose members meet so often for religious exercises,—it is no wonder that the people are led to neglect them in private. Let the Methodists correct this evil; and then, say what they will, and think what they will of me—I shall rejoice.

And indeed—if I could have engaged you, Sir, or any one—at whom they would look with a more favourable eye, than I am regarded with—to give them this admonition, I would gladly have resigned the task, into hands more likely to accomplish the object;—so convinced am I of its magnitude. But let them be assured that, while the same neglect of the scriptures continues in their society,—however their numbers may increase, and however respectable the character or talents of those who may stand forward to *vindicate* them,—they cannot truly prosper, with that prosperity which—to a Christian body—is alone desirable. You may tell them, that “they will not materially err, *if they follow the faith of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher.*” But our Lord is “a *jealous* God,”—jealous of his own glory: and it is one of his revealed characters, for which his people thank him. He has said—“them that honour me, I will honour.” And in vain do we think to honour him, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

I know how prevalent the notion is, even among nominal PROTESTANTS, that the text of the Bible is so obscure and so uncertain, that we had better not meddle too much with it; but may rather more safely take it—interpreted for us—by men who, (we think) understand it well. I will not call the notion rank POPERY, though it be the very essence of Popery; but it is rank INFIDELITY. The

diffs, at which a chapter of the Bible *is* read. I mention this instance with much pleasure; and trust that it will soon be followed by many others.

Christian who says from his heart—" *thy word* is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my paths,"—will not undervalue any aids, placed within his reach, for a right understanding of that word; but, on the contrary, will prize them the more, the higher *it* rises in his estimation. But it is as *aids* he will use them; and will not suffer them to usurp the place of that, to which they profess to minister.

I come now, Sir, to your encomium on the character and conduct of Mr WESLEY:—and indeed I approach this part of the subject with considerable timidity, and shall say as little upon it as possible. My apprehensiveness arises—by no means from a fear of being unable to say enough, to convince every unprejudiced reader how well founded the observations in my Address were, which gave occasion to this part of your reply;—but from a fear of being led to say too much,—of being allured by the facility, with which documents might be brought forward to establish those observations, into a discussion unprofitable to all, and irritating to many.

Do—consider, Sir, whether your letter affords not an instance of the evil, which I took notice of in the Methodist Society;—such a jealousy of idolatrous attachment to Mr Wesley, as will not bear a hint derogatory to his honour. Excuse me for saying that—long as it is since you have ceased to be a member of his Society—you seem to have retained that general character of its members. Mr. Wesley seems to be your own idol. For were his character as superlatively excellent as you describe, it is making him an *idol* to think that, on that account, any of his errors—especially such as affect a society so numerous as he formed—are so consecrated, that they ought not to be noticed. I think I noticed them with as tender a hand, as it was possible to mark them with. Of his character in the sight of God, I pretended not to decide: and the only mention I made of his laboriousness, and his manners, and his ta-

lents was a respectful one.—Yet, as I conjectured, you were so startled that you thought a long, and, I must say—an extravagant panegyric needful, to counterbalance the caution with which I expressed myself.

I am sensible that very amiable feelings, of friendship and grateful affection, prompted you to the warmth, with which this part of your letter is penned ;—but I regret that they betrayed you (as I think) into a forgetfulness of—what it is always well to remember—what poor creatures the best of us are in ourselves ; and of that important rule of Scripture, to “judge nothing before the time, until “the Lord come—who both will bring to light “the hidden things of darkness, and will make “manifest the counsels of the hearts.” 1 Cor. iv. 5.

I did indeed say that Mr. Wesley claimed and exercised an *uncontrolled power* over his Societies ; and that none could be members of them but those who paid an *absolute submission* to his authority. And, in saying this I stated a notorious fact—a fact acknowledged and vindicated by Mr. Wesley himself ;—a fact, my assertion of which needed no personal knowledge of him to authenticate ;—and a fact which cannot be overturned, by your declaration—that *you* “never could discover any thing of this kind.” You have only, Sir, to read his minutes (*ut supra*) from the 17th to the 20th page inclusive, to discover that the power, which he claimed and strenuously asserted his right to, was absolute and uncontrolled indeed,—to a degree greater than that possessed by the whole bench of Bishops over the members of the established church, or by the governors of any church ancient or modern,—except that which is claimed and exercised by the pope over the Church of Rome.

That Mr. Wesley’s power originated very differently, and was exercised for very different objects, I admit ; and that he exercised it with the greatest

suavity of manners, I am ready to believe: for had he not, it could not have been maintained. Neither will I impeach his motives for asserting this power; though I think you seem to take a very confined view of *selfish motives*, and express yourself with a force which—in the case of any mere man—the Scriptures do not warrant, in declaring your absolute certainty, that no “heart corrupting, “ selfish love of power operated or even *existed* in “him.” With the question of Mr Wesley’s internal motives, I will have nothing to do. I am sure I did not drop a hint against them in my Address. But I repeat what I there intimated,—and I repeat it because it is a principle of no small importance,—that no man *ought* to claim such a power over the members of any Christian society, as Mr Wesley asserted to himself; and that no Christians *ought* to submit to the claim.

You say, that had I known Mr. Wesley, as you knew him, “his greatest foibles would scarcely *excite a smile*.” I had not said a word of his foibles; nor will I be induced to touch upon them now. I desire to keep in my view topics of much higher import. But this I say, that if he were my father or my brother, his opposition to the principles of divine truth would excite much more than a smile: and that—not to go beyond those Minutes so often quoted—he at the close of them opposes all the fundamental principles of the Gospel; and was followed by Mr. Fletcher in a more laboured and systematic opposition to them. Of such men I can only say—however dissatisfied their admirers may be—that I hope they were brought to repentance,—that is—to another mind,—before they died. And it is in that Gospel of the free, sovereign, and effectual grace of God, which they opposed, that I see the only ground of such a hope.

It is an awful thing to set up the *characters of men*, as of more importance than the *truths of God*; as we do, when we think that the latter ought not

to be vindicated, lest the former should be injured). A man may be very amiable, and yet may be no Christian: and even if he be a Christian, his errors or his faults are not to be spared as *sacred*, on account of his personal amiableness. Against all such ideas our Lord's expostulation is pointed—“How can ye believe, that receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”

Indeed, Sir, the Gospel discovers something too great, to be sacrificed to the glory of men—of worms; even “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” In this view, what is Mr. Wesley to me, or St. Cyprian, or St. Austin, or any other man? If they saw that glory and knew Christ, I trust through grace so do I; and so does many an old woman, and many a young stripling. So far, I will hail them as brethren. But do they say anything against that glory? I know them not;—“get thee behind me, Satan.” And so I trust shall I be treated by any Christian, who shall find that—through the evil of the flesh—I drop a word against that glory; in which I include the glory of the whole work of Christ, in giving himself for his people, and calling them, and leading them, and keeping them to the end, till he bring them to behold his glory in the celestial mansions. Here, Sir, is an object worth striving about: and the weakest believer, when he is in a right spirit, will be ready to strive for it against the whole world.

And here, also, is the only true touchstone of human character. I have indeed heard the Gospel spoken of, as a test of moral character, in a way and sense—in which none, who know the Gospel, would assent to the proposition. I have heard many a laboured discourse to prove, that the *evidences* of Revelation were so nicely adapted,—(neither so strong as to extort the assent of the ill-disposed, nor so weak as to leave the well-disposed dissatisfied)—that it thus tried men's sincerity of heart and good

dispositions :—and that this, along with a collection of excellent rules to the well disposed sinners, and a certain quantity of aid to help them in observing these rules,—was the great end of Christianity. And no doubt the persons, who put forward such a system, must look at themselves with great complacency, when they consider what sincerity of heart, and good dispositions they have shewn, in not being *Deists* like others :—while all the while they are as far from possessing the Christianity, which the Bible describes, or believing the Gospel which it reveals, as any *Deist* upon earth.

But in another sense, nothing can be more true, than that this Gospel is a test of moral character : and it is equally true that—applying this test to the moral character of all men by nature—they appear haters of God and godlessness. Trying men by any other test, they may seem a race of very well-disposed beings,—however frail. All men (even the most vicious) acknowledge the necessity of good morals ; and almost all men—that *general piety* is a very proper thing. But “ the glorious Gospel of God our Saviour” comes ; and “ the thoughts of “ many hearts are revealed.” He is *despised* and *rejected*, by men ;—alike by learned and unlearned—civilized and barbarous—sober and profligate—serious and profane : by all but those who—receiving a new mind and a new spirit from above,—are drawn to him, and “ made willing in the day of “ his power,” and given to know him as “ the on-“ ly true God and eternal life.”

This *contempt* and *rejection* of Him—“ God ma-“ nifest in the flesh”—coming to his own, and not received by them—is a heavy charge indeed against human nature ; against the atheism and pride and worldliness of our carnal minds ;—but is verified daily even by those, who are most indignant at it ; and acknowledged to be true of their own nature by all, who are “ created anew in Christ Jesus.” They have done with all glorying except in his Cross ;

and therefore they ever have been, and ever will be—like their divine master—despised and hated by the world.

Here then, I repeat it, is the only infallible test of any man's character—*What thinks he of Christ?*—of that Christ whom the scriptures declare,—the one and only Saviour of his people from their sins,—who came “to seek and to save that which was “lost,”—who “calls—not the righteous—but sinners to repentance,”—and is “exalted to give repen-“tance and remission of sins?” Does he believe the glad tidings? are they his joy—his glory? Blessed is he: “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto him.” He is born from above; and believing in this anointed one of God, he hath life and shall have life through his name. But does he oppose this record, and is he blind to the glory of this Saviour?—either in the open form of avowed infidelity,—or (assuming through fear, shame, or interest,) the name of Christian, but setting up an imaginary Christ of his own formation against the Christ of God, by rejecting the testimony of God in his word;—or perhaps *professing* to believe that testimony—but evidencing that he does not believe it by continuing to cleave to his idols and his sins? That man (whatever be his name or reputation in the world) I am obliged to consider as yet among the children of disobedience, and alienated from the life of God;—and to set up his character for morality or piety or wisdom, in opposition to the evidences of his unbelief, would be to sacrifice the truth of God to a lie.

The Bible tells me but of *one* Christ;—and owns as children of the light none but those who know and believe in him. It knows no *half-Saviour* for the *half-sinful*; and owns not, as believers of the Gospel, those who believe such a system. Many false Christs and false prophets also are gone out into the world; and we are warned that they “work such “signs and wonders as would deceive, if it were

"possible, even the elect." I desire therefore ever to be on my guard against the wonderful reputation, or wonderful (apparent) usefulness of those, who do not preach the Truth. And if, in that fidelity to the testimony of God, I offend the infidelity of men, I hope I shall be ever willing to meet the consequences: and I *shall* be willing so far as I am kept in memory of that blessed word—"mine eyes are upon the *faithful* in the land, that they may dwell with me."—You will pardon me, Sir, for this seeming digression. I think it much more important to declare the only Scriptural rule, for estimating human character, than to examine the particular character of any individual.

In the paragraph, which immediately follows your panegyric of Mr. Wesley, you greatly mistake my meaning. When I briefly took notice of the general aspect of methodism, as contrasted "with "the calm and sober, though happy and heavenly "character" of the Christianity of the Gospel,—believe me I was far from intending to intimate, that the genius of true Christianity is adverse to any degree of *zeal* for God—of *boldness* in declaring his truth—or of *activity* in propagating knowledge of it:—far from intending to intimate, that these things are not so essentially included in the spirit of the Gospel, that—in proportion as Christians imbibe that spirit—they will abound in these its fruits. That *zeal*, *activity*, and *boldness* gave occasion to the charge you mention against the primitive Christians, as men who "turned the world "upside down:" and the same causes will ever continue to offend and irritate the world.

But truly, Sir, these were not the appearances to which I alluded, in the general aspect of Methodism; and whether you can enter or not into the meaning of that passage in my Address, on which your remark is founded, you may be satisfied that this was not its meaning—by reading it again in connection with the observations, by which it is

immediately followed. I shall here only add, that there are two mistakes very common in the world, and—though apparently opposite to each other—yet springing from the same source—ignorance of the true Gospel:—the one is the mistake of those Laodicean professors, who indulge a cowardly indolence, or carnal indifference about the cause of Christ, and mask it perhaps under a plea of the calm and inoffensive genius of Christianity;—the other more specious but no less unscriptural, is the mistake of those, who often pride themselves on their exemption from the former, but mistake a rash and heady turbulence of animal fervour for Christian zeal.

You appear much displeased, Sir, at the observations I have made, on what the Methodists call their *experience*; and on what I conceive a most dangerous perversion of the most important Scriptural terms, which they employ to sanction it. You think that some of my “observations on this head” —have too near a resemblance of the manner of “Lord Shaftsbury and Dean Swift.” To that I shall only say—that it is far from my ambition to imitate either the laboured pleasantry of the noble Peer, or the easy but sarcastic keenness of the reverend Dean. You think that “the epithets of T. ‘mechanical and periodical—favour much more of the epigrammatic wit, than of the charity that hopeth all things.’” To that I shall only say—without attempting (which would be no difficult task) to produce facts to prove them awfully just—that I was very *serious* when I penned these offensive epithets; and that I view the whole subject as of such vast moment, that I would not intentionally let fall a single witty expression, to lighten its solemnity.

You bring forward the authority of two Saints—(and here, Sir, I hope I shall not be charged with being witty—though I have no objection that my expression should be considered as a serious testimony against the appropriation of that epithet to the

so-called Fathers of the Church, as if it could either with certainty be said to belong to all of them, or were not in the language of Scripture, employed to denote the common character of all believers in all ages)—you bring forward, I say, the authority of two Saints, with the authority of two Bishops, and two Doctors,—to prove what I never controverted, and am not now disposed to controvert—the frequent “occurrence of sensible relief, where there has been deep distress of conscience.” In truth, Sir, that is a fact, which stands in my view upon infinitely higher testimony, than all that you have adduced—upon the testimony of Scripture. And even if it were not supported by this, it is in itself a fact of that nature, about which I would admit the testimony of many a Methodist,—(even though I might consider the sensible relief he had experienced as of the most spurious kind)—as soon as St. Cyprian’s.

But with the indisputable facts of this nature, which my Bible records, it declares also the way in which the relief was brought to the sinner’s mind, and by what it was produced. And *here* I will not admit the opinion of any man, to invalidate the authority of Scripture: and when there is interwoven with the narration of instances—of such sensible relief and sudden feelings—an unscriptural account of those feelings and that relief,—I shall be ready enough to admit the existence of the facts, wherever I have reason to depend on the veracity of the narrator;—but I shall be as ready to deny that—(if their account of them be true)—the facts are of any value, or constitute any part of the gracious experience of a Christian:—and this, even though they be “received and respected by the whole religious world.”—How far any of the instances, which you adduce, come under this description, I will not stop to enquire: for I am anxious to divest my subject of all questions, in which nothing is concerned but the authority or character of men.

You quote my assertion that—all true religion begins and is carried on by the power of God experienced in the heart; and my observation that—I know that this is perfectly distinct from that natural agitation of the passions, into which it seems the object of the Methodistic system to lash the minds of its members. You then add—“Sir, if you know this matter so distinctly, I conceive you ought to have carried that distinctness into your statement.”—Here I might urge in my vindication, that it is one thing to say I know two matters are perfectly distinct, and quite another to say—I know them distinctly,—so distinctly as to be able to carry that distinctness into my statement. Had I said the latter, perhaps I would have exposed myself to a heavier, though different, charge from you—to a charge of arrogance.

I might also urge that, in a pamphlet so short—and embracing such a variety of topics—as my Address, it could not reasonably be expected that I should enter fully into each; and that, in this part of the subject—besides asserting the distinction between the gracious feelings of a Christian and all that natural agitation of the passions, which is too often mistaken for them by many Christians, and awfully confounded with them in the Methodistic system,—I illustrated the nature and origin of the latter in many instances, and expressly stated the origin of the former. See Expostulatory Address, pp. 10, 11, 29, 30, 32. 2d Edition.

But waving all these observations, in extenuation of the fault which you reprehend,—I shall proceed to make the best amends in my power, by now stating the important distinction, as plainly as I am able. And that I may be the better understood, allow me to make some preliminary observations, connected with the subject. I have declared in my Address, that genuine *faith* is “productive of feelings the most blessed;” and to discriminate between these, as part of the gracious experience of a real Chris-

tian, and the spurious feelings—which, I think, are often mistaken for them—is my present business.

By *feelings* here—(whether genuine or spurious)—I understand—the more *perceptible* movements of the *affections*. There is often, perhaps, annexed also to the word an idea of the *suddenness* of their excitement: but it appears to me that this no farther enters into its proper import, than as the circumstance—of their being suddenly excited—tends to make the excitement of them more sensible. Attention to this signification of the word—which might be abundantly confirmed by considering its application to the movement of the passions by *natural* objects)—ought to render many more cautious than they are, of decrying (as it were) all *feelings* in religion.

In fact—that any religion, in which the *affections* are not concerned, is not the religion of the Gospel,—is obvious from almost every page of Scripture:—nor is it possible, in the nature of things, that the *faith* of the Gospel can exist—without the *affections* being excited; and—(in one sense)—the very same *affections*, which are excited in natural men by *natural* objects.—Are *their* minds influenced to love, hatred, joy, grief, fear, hope, desire, &c.—according to the nature of the visible and temporal things with which they are conversant? So must the mind of the *believer* be influenced,—according to the nature of the invisible and eternal things, which are revealed in the word of God. These things are of such infinite importance and deep interest, that they only need to be known—in order to engage all the powers of the mind, and to give the same *affections*—which before were engrossed by vanity and idols.—a direction altogether new. And the more clearly the believer discerns the things of God in their *true nature*,—and the more firmly he is persuaded of them in their *certain reality*,—the more strongly must his *affections* be moved, and his will be regulated by them.

In short, in no state of man—either in the state of nature or of grace—can he be divested of his will,—and those motions of the will—which are called the affections, and—in their more sensible exercise—the *feelings* of his mind. Nor can we, in any state of man, dissolve the necessary connection between those determinations of his will, and his views of the objects—to or from which it is inclined. In this respect there is no difference between a lunatic in Bedlam,—whose anxieties and joys and sorrows are excited by his views of the objects that are presented to his mind,—and the most rational man in the world, whose hopes and fears, desires and aversions, delights and pains, are equally excited by his more sober views of things.

Nor, in the same respect, is there any difference between the greatest worldling and the most gracious believer. To talk of a real *belief* of what is declared in the Gospel—as inoperative and a mere *speculation*,—is as contrary to sound philosophy, as it is to every page of Scripture. We may indeed believe a speculative truth—such as a mathematical theorem,—and rest in the mere speculation of it, without having one *affection* excited. But why? Because we view it as neither good nor evil, and therefore uninteresting to us. But we cannot really believe what is unspeakably interesting to our happiness, and believe it as such,—without being interested by it, in proportion to the clearness of our perception and the strength of our persuasion of its nature.

Such—unspeakably such—is what the glorious Gospel of God declares. And therefore those professors of the Gospel, however nominally orthodox, who rest in talk and speculation about its doctrines,—while they produce no effects upon their hearts or in their lives,—do but deceive themselves; and shew that they do not really believe the Gospel which they profess. They may give a verbal assent to its truths, or to something very like them; but

that is not really to believe—or to be persuaded of their truth. They may even have an *opinion*—that it is either very possible or very probable that they are true: and may succeed in covering from their own view the real dubiousness of their mind, by not adverting to what they do not like to observe. And such an opinion may produce very little effect; and will certainly produce none decisively characteristic of a Christian. But such an opinion is not Christian faith.—The truths of the Gospel are not proposed as matters of high *probability*; but are authoritatively declared—as the certain word of that God, who cannot lie. And the more these truths are examined, the more will they be found adapted—powerfully to excite, and duly to regulate—every motion of the will—every feeling of the heart.

Most justly therefore do the Scriptures, in describing the natural state of sinners, connect the *blindness* of their minds with the corruption of their wills and carnality of their affections. Are they described as “alienated from the life of God?” It is—“through the ignorance that is in them—because of the blindness of their hearts.”—Under “the power of darkness,” they are lovers of their own selves, lovers of the world, haters and despisers of the true God:—they are all gone astray—they have turned every one to his own way—they have set up idols in their hearts; and after them their affections go, and to them their lives are given.

And as justly do the same Scriptures connect *the knowledge of the truth*—the glorious truth of Him who has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel,—with the conversion of the heart from idols, to serve the living and the true God with a willing service.—“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”—“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”—“Chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth.”—“Faith worketh by love:”—and wherever there is the *love* of any object,—there will

be *delight* in the enjoyment of it,—there will be *desire* after it,—there will be *fear* of whatever threatens its loss,—there will be *hatred* of whatever is contrary to its nature.

Now, Sir, I may appear to some to have digressed unwarrantably from my subject:—but, in fact, all that I have written in the four last pages has been designed—to make way for the repetition of that observation in my Address, that—the real *faith* of Christ is “*productive of feelings the most blessed.*” Those feelings alone, which spring from that source, do I acknowledge to be gracious,—in contradistinction to all others—whether sensual or religious.—You know, Sir, as well as I, that there have been the strongest *religious feelings* in the wildest enthusiasts, and others—who have been most remote from having any thing like Christian faith. And shall the strength of their feelings, or the circumstance of their being excited by certain views that they had of *spiritual* and *eternal* things, make me afraid to say that their religion was vain, and their feelings spurious?

It is a very narrow view of the carnal mind, which supposes it no where to be found—but in the garb of profaneness, or the eager pursuit after worldly objects. It appears in some in a form—ever so *serious* and *contemplative*, and *abstracted* from the things of sense:—and in a *religious* form also—according to a religion suited to its ignorance of the true God, and aversion to him. And just as the carnal sensualist will have his *feelings* wrought on by the objects, which engage his mind,—so may the *carnal religionist*—(excuse the combination of these terms)—by the objects which occupy him. But the *exciting causes* of the strongest feelings in both are alike delusive; and the things which move their affections are but vanity:—and the carnal mind reigns in them both equally, though in different forms, because they are both alike under the power

of unbelief, and alienated from the life of the only true God through the ignorance that is in them.

Now let it be remembered—that all the matter, which true *faith* believes, is what God reveals in his word. The Scriptures have been given “ to “ make us *wise unto salvation* ;” and are so sufficient for the purpose for which they are designed, that the idea of any *supplementary revelation* being needful to any individual among us can originate in nothing but ignorance of Scripture. We, each of us indeed, need “ the spirit of wisdom and revelation,” to “ enlighten the eyes of our understandings,” that we may set—in their truth and glory and certainty —“ the things that are freely given of God” to his believing people :—but these are the things which his *word* declares, and no other things. In other words—we need the spirit of God, to give us to *believe* what his word reveals ;—because that is so opposite to all the natural errors and corruptions of our carnal minds ; but it is, at best, but *enthusiasm* to expect—that the spirit of God should now be given, to reveal to sinners any thing, that his word does not contain.

When, therefore, the religious feelings of any spring from a supposition—that any thing is revealed to them, which the Scriptures do not declare,—as that *they* are in a state of acceptance with God ;—or any thing contrary to what the Scriptures do declare,—as that they are delivered from the inbeing of every principle of evil, &c.—I care not how strong their transports of joy are ;—I care not how strong their persuasion of the reality of the revelation is :—the thing that they believe *may be a lie*, and in the latter case certainly *is* ;—and all the feelings that spring from their believing it are essentially different from the feelings that are truly gracious,—are at least delusively precarious in their tendency, and often ruinous in their effects.

I know that some of the men, who boast of such feelings, will think that I preclude the possibility of

all joy and peace,—because I confine the exercise of genuine *faith* to the things already revealed in the Bible. But it is to be feared they think so, because—the veil being yet upon their minds—they have never seen the glorious nature of what the Bible reveals. With every declaration of the wrath of God revealed against sin, that is calculated to awaken the most insensible conscience which believes those declarations,—it reveals every thing needful to give the most oppressed conscience “ peace and “ joy in believing” the Gospel—the glad tidings that proclaim a SAVIOUR—all sufficient for the chief of sinners—provided for such—and faithful to save unto the uttermost all who *believe* in him.

If we turn to the Scriptures, we shall find the *belief* of this simple—but glorious—Gospel of God our Saviour to be described—as the spring of every gracious affection and emotion,—whether of joy, or love, or desire, or grief,—in the Apostolic ages of the church. It was this, that sent the Ethiopian Eunuch on his way rejoicing. It was this, that made the Philippian Jailer—whose hand had, the hour before, been raised with rash desperation against his own life—rejoice, while he set meat before them, who had spoken to him the word of the Lord. Yea it was this—the belief of all that they testified concerning the Lord Jesus,—that had filled the hearts of Paul and Silas with every heavenly emotion, while they lay in the inner prison—with their feet made fast in the stocks—and their backs bleeding from many stripes;—so that at midnight they were heard by their fellow prisoners, “praying and singing praises unto God.”—The greatness and glory of the Saviour, whom the Gospel reveals, and of his salvation, are such—that they who believe that Gospel will acknowledge, that they only need to have the faith of it invigorated and maintained in their minds, in order to have all the most blessed feelings brought into the most lively and constant exercise.

As to the *suddenness* of their excitement, that is a circumstance which affects not the nature of the feelings, so as to make them either better or worse. President Edwards justly observes, in his treatise on Religious Affections—(to which I would refer the reader, who desires to see my present subject handled more at large, by a man whose writings appear to be the result of a deeply-thinking and well-informed mind)—that there are here two opposite errors, into which different persons seem to fall. The one, and the more dangerous one, is of those who imagine, that all very strong movements of the affections,—that are of a religious nature, and very *sudden*—must come from the Spirit of God, and therefore must be good and genuine; and this, because they cannot account for their excitement upon other principles. But, in fact, they may come from the father of lies, who (we are told in Scripture) sometimes “transforms himself into an angel of light:” and they may come, in a variety of ways, from ourselves,—though we are not at all conscious of the mode in which they originate. For we are too much unacquainted—not only with our own connection with the invisible world of spirits—but with the internal constitution of our own minds, the influence of the imagination, the mutual actions and reactions of soul and body, &c.—to decide upon the origin and character of our feelings, from the circumstance of their being *suddenly* moved. And there is no extreme of wild or wicked fanaticism, to which the adoption of such a standard—(both unphilosophical and unscriptural)—would not expose us.

But perhaps there are others, who—observing these dangers—have fallen into an opposite error; and either altogether decry, or look with unwarrantable suspicion at every account of religious emotions, that are suddenly excited. But if they acknowledge the authority of Scripture, and the influence of the Spirit of God—in giving his people to discover and

believe the great truths in his word,—they cannot deny that such feelings *may* be genuine and gracious. And perhaps there are few Christians, who—in a greater or less degree---find not such at various times in their experience. How often, when their “spirit is overwhelmed” and their “hearts disquieted within them,” is the soul---“or ever they are aware---made like the chariots of Amminadib!”---by the clear discovery and lively persuasion, which the spirit gives them of the things of Christ.

We have, therefore, a more sure standard in the word of God, by which to estimate the nature of our religious feelings, than either the circumstance of their being in general *religious*---(i. e. moved by some views that we have of spiritual and eternal things)---or the circumstance of their being *sensibly* strong, and accompanied with a perceptible *emotion*,---or the circumstance of their being *suddenly*, or not suddenly, excited. The only certain standard, by which we can judge of them---(and it is a standard, to which the Scriptural believer, will at all times, desire to adhere)---is to be found in the word of God, ---that declares the truths, the *belief of which* produces every affection that is truly gracious.

And here, Sir, let me observe, that---while I have obeyed the call you gave me to treat particularly of those more sensible determinations of the affections which are called *feelings*, for the purpose of distinguishing between such as are genuinely Christian and such as are spurious imitations of them,---I must ever maintain that the best of those feelings---so far as their perceptible liveliness is occasional and temporary---is of very subordinate importance, in comparison of the more *permanent* and *habitual* regulation of the affections, and determination of the will, which “the *belief of the truth*” must produce in us, as far as we walk by faith. The latter---combined with a profession of that truth, and manifested in the various exercises of willing devotedness to God, and humble---active love one to an-

ther,—constitute the only scriptural evidence, to mark those whom I can recognize as Christians indeed.

Too—too often have I met with those, who were forward to boast of the times—when they had such and such sudden impressions, and fine feelings of divine joy, &c. brought into their minds, —and who appeared to keep up a considerable elation of mind, and confidence about their state, by feeding their self-complacency with such periodical recitals ;—in whom at the same time no one decisive “fruit of the spirit” could be found :—some of them the bitterest opposers of the fundamental truths of God ;—others evincing by the earthliness of their minds, or the indulged malignity of their tempers, or the unbridled falsehood of their tongues, or the injuriousness of their conduct, that they never truly believed the first principles of the Gospel which they profess :—and others, who—from the defect of every temper of love to God or man—had much more reason to examine themselves whether they were indeed in the faith, than to talk of the time when they first believed.

Far am I, Sir, from wishing to intimate that the observations, into which I have been led on the whole of this important subject, are *exclusively* applicable to the Methodists. I think them indeed *peculiarly* applicable to that body, and peculiarly needful to be addressed to their most serious attention. The truth of this position—it would be easy to demonstrate, by the most copious extracts from their most authentic documents. For instance, Sir,—you know that there is scarcely a number of their Magazine, published by Mr. Wesley and others, that would not afford me materials for executing this task. But I willingly abstain, at present, from thus making the application of my observations ; and hope I may not hereafter be forced to it. Nothing, I trust, shall force me to it, but the necessity of de-

fending important truth : and that necessity may be created by their vindicators.

I would not wait for this, if I had no higher object—than to vindicate myself for having written the Expostulatory Address, or to turn the tide of popular opinion against the Methodists. But I can assure them with truth, that I have no wish to discredit them with the public,—much less to irritate their minds. I regret, for their own sakes, that some of them appear so much irritated by what I have already written. It is a bad sign;—particularly bad, so far as I shall be found to have written the truth. But perhaps, after the present object of their resentment is in the grave, they may yet be led to give a more serious and candid consideration to his admonitions.

And here, Sir, I find myself obliged to close this Letter ; and to entreat your indulgence, and the indulgence of all my readers, for the slowness with which I proceed through your Remarks. Their indulgence, I am sure, would be afforded, if all the circumstances under which I write were known. I had hoped in this Letter to arrive at the end of your Remarks on the Methodistic discipline, and in another perhaps to finish my observations on the remainder of your Letter—in which you more expressly treat of doctrines. But I find that I could not execute this plan, without exceeding the limits I have prescribed to each of my Letters ; and that I must trouble you with two more, before I shall be at liberty to meet another antagonist. Meanwhile,

I remain, Sir,

With the best wishes,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

P. S. The terms, in which I have expressed my sentiments of Mr. Wesley's *principles*, may appear to some Christians who are unacquainted with them, unwarrantably severe. But let them judge, after reading the following extracts from the close of his Minutes.

"Nothing can be more false than the maxim, "that a man is to *do nothing in order to justification*."—To confirm this assertion, he observes that—"Whoever repents should *do works meet for re-pentance*. And if this is not *in order to find favour, what does he do them for?*"

After declaring his opinion that—"we are rewarded for the sake of our works—secundum *merita operum*—and as our works deserve,"—he goes on to state the following objection against one of his propositions:—"God does in fact justify those who, by their own confession, neither fear *ed God nor wrought righteousness*"—i. e. before their justification:—and then adds—"Is this an exception to the general rule? It is a doubt whether God makes any exception at all. But how are we sure that the person in question never did fear God and work righteousness? His own thinking so is no proof: for we know, how all that are *convinced of sin, undervalue themselves in every respect.*"

These are some of the deliberate sentiments, which Mr. Wesley maintained, which Mr. Fletcher still more strenuously and systematically defended, and which constitute, to this day, the standard of doctrine as held in the Methodist Society. I shall not here make any farther observation on them than this,—that the more acquainted any man is with the truths of the Gospel, the more he will abhor such propositions, as contrary to its essential principles: and that whoever really believes those propositions, asserted by Mr. Wesley, does not really

believe the Gospel. He may often speak an evangelical *language*, as I freely own that Mr. Wesley and Mr. Fletcher frequently did: but he must speak it in an unevangelical sense. He may, at times, talk of being *justified by faith*—of being *saved by grace*, &c.—but he must employ these scriptural terms—*grace*, *faith*, *salvation*, &c. in a meaning altogether unscriptural.

Trin. Coll. March 14th, 1803.

LETTER III.

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sons for the Author's real assertion—Hypocrisy and self-deception distinguished—The supposed utility of the Class-meetings examined—Accounts of experience—A hint to future respondents—Tumultuous assemblies, a great instrument of spreading Methodism.—Importance of the remaining topics.—The deepest ground of the Author's dislike accounted for—He has not inverted the rule—*by their fruits ye shall know them*—Dangerous misapplication of that rule detected—The Author has not misrepresented the Methodistic idea of *Sanctification*—His argument proved not to be a *play on words*—Mr. K. mistakes the object of it—Two things implied in the argument—False notion of the duty of *self-denial*—*When* its necessity will really cease—Scriptural character of our own nature—Why unknown to natural men—What evidences of *contrabated depravity* they admit—Necessarily insensible to the strongest evidence from the very nature of it—Perfectionists—Duration of the warfare against the *flesh*—The Methodistic system supposes a general improvement in the nature of all men—Their state of *salvability*—Growth in grace quite distinct from the improvement of our own nature—Mr. Wesley's perversion of the text, 2 Cor. v. 17.—Inconsistent with himself—Great danger arising from the perversion of that text, and from the whole of the Methodistic doctrine of *Sanctification*—The expression of the Liturgy which Mr. K. conceives to countenance their notion: founded on the very truth of scripture, which he thinks it apparently contradicts.

SIR,

I WAS well aware that my observations on the Methodist *Class Meetings* and *Love-Feasts* would be particularly offensive, because I knew how highly they rate the importance of this part of their discipline, and how much it does contribute to maintain

their entire system, and is essentially interwoven with it. I was not therefore surprised at the earnestness which you manifest to repel my observations on this subject. That *you* have so much misconceived my meaning, I can only impute to the warmth of your zeal; and that you have imposed on yourself by arguments the most fallacious and inconclusive, only to the indefensible nature of the cause which you advocate.

Yet while I am conscious that I shall here have no difficulty in replying to you, (for it is often easy for common sense to detect the false glosses, which it has required considerable ingenuity to impose)—I have notwithstanding hesitated whether I should not leave this part of your letter unanswered. I have hesitated whether the topics connected with it were not of too *subordinate* importance to call for discussion. But while the unscriptural constitution of the Methodistic discipline originates indeed in the fundamental errors of their system, I yet perceive—looking at the most dangerous of those errors—that it awfully contributes to maintain and propagate them.—It is not without a deliberate conviction of this that I proceed to the subject; and I shall be as brief as possible in handling it.

Your arguments in favor of Mr. Wesley's Class-meetings may be reduced to the following heads.—1. St. James advises Christians to *confess their faults one to another*; and the Methodists only make the practice regular instead of occasional.—2. There have been similar meetings among the Puritans—the German Pietists, and the English Societies; to the latter of which Dr. Woodward bears the strongest testimony of approbation.—3. There have arisen very beneficial effects, especially among the working classes, from these meetings of the Methodists, for more than 60 years; and those effects you strongly attest from your own knowledge.—4 Such meetings are necessary to the existence of the Methodist Society, and evince the sagacity of its founder.

To each of these topics of argument I shall distinctly reply.—The first claims the precedence, as being borrowed from the words of Scripture; but it is a striking instance of the way scripture is commonly quoted to defend the inventions of men. An apostle says—“confess your faults one to another”—and *therefore* Christians are to meet from time to time, to be examined as to the state of their souls, and to declare before each other what progresfs they have made in the ways of God! Is it necessary, Sir, to do more than lay the argument—and the thing which it is adduced to prove—beside each other, in order to expose its fallacy? I might ask—whether in the apostolic precept, which you quote, there is any intimation that the confession of our faults is to be made in a *Meeting* of several Christians assembled together; tho' I know that there are cases in which such a confession before many may be called for—(according to the primitive discipline of the Christian Church)—because the faults to be confessed have occasioned scandal to many. I might ask—whether at the Methodist Class-meetings the communications, which the members severally make about themselves, be commonly in the way of confessing their *faults*; tho' I know that they declare their religious feelings of sorrow or of joy—and their religious state of supposed declension or progressiveness in grace.

But it is of more consequence to state plainly—what the *real* import is of that much neglected precept of St. James. It obviously is this—acknowledge to each other with candour and self-humiliation your *faults*—wherein *soever* you have transgressed one against the other; and pray one for another that your wounds thus opened may be healed*

* If this passage in St. James be considered—(as it is by some, and with much appearance of probability)—as a continuation of the Apostolic direction in the preceding verse, the word “*healed*” must be interpreted literally of the removal of bodily maladies,—with which they were visited, as a chastisement from the Lord, on account of their sins. In

—the wounds which you have sustained by indulging, in word or deed, a spirit contrary to mutual tenderness and love ;—that they may be healed, instead of rankling within and spreading like a cancer.

Here, Sir, is a scriptural injunction, which harmonizes with the whole tenor of the Gospel ;—and which is of too great importance to be sacrificed to the misapplication you have made of it. Here is a scriptural injunction, which needs indeed to be inculcated on Christians of the present day ; and which, when attended to, will send one and another of them —not to a Methodist Class-meeting, to tell how they are walking with God, whether under the light of his countenance or the hidings of his face, —but to the chamber of an injured Christian brother, to take shame to themselves for having walked so contrary to the rule of his word towards men.— Ah ! Sir, if you but knew, even as well as I do, how every principle of truth, of kindness, and of common honesty is daily violated under the mask of a high, but false, religious profession ; and how this profession is kept up and strengthened by ignorance and disbelief of the word of God ;—surely you would rather help to vindicate the truths of that word, than wrest it by misinterpretation into the service of a party. We are apt to look with wonder and with pity at the infatuation of the poor Papists, who

this case, it is obvious that the text can have nothing to do with such a confession of faults, as Mr. K. supposes to be made in the Class meetings. But in either case, the word rendered “*faults*” can relate only to *those* faults by which our brethren—to whom we are directed to acknowledge them—have been affected : and the original word is used in just the same application—Matth. vi. 14, 15. & xviii, 35.—Undoubtedly in the general profession, which the believer makes of the Christian faith—there is included an acknowledgment of his own sinfulness and the evil of his nature :—but neither is there any precept in Scripture for his making known to other men the particular workings of that evil nature, where they have not been injured by them,—nor in many cases would it be consistent with Christian wisdom, or Christian love, to do so.

are taught to see in this abused precept of the Apostle their *auricular Confession* of sins to a priest. I think it just as strange that you should discover in it an open confession of them to a Class-leader. In both instances I see the word of God made of none effect by the traditions of men—and a human invention obtruded in place of a divine command.

Leaving the ground of Scripture, you pass in the second place in the example of other Christians, who, you say, have adopted the same practice, with no other difference—but that, what was occasional with them, is constant in the Methodist Society.—If it were so, it would not alter my views of the practice at all.—No prescription of age can sanction a custom that is unscriptural and evil.—But I am bold to say, that no attentive reader need go farther than your own letter for a refutation of your argument—for a proof that the practices you appeal to, as similar to the Methodist Class-meetings, were essentially different. You refer to meetings, in which *room was always left* for such communications of spiritual experiences—from those who *choose* it. Now I do not enquire at present, how far even this is expedient, except under very considerable restrictions. But I say—this is essentially different from a meeting, in which *room is not left to any* to forbear making such communications, whether he *choose* it or not.

You urge that “no one is subject to any enquiry which could imply *embarrassment*.”—You know, Sir, that the enquiry commonly runs thus—always, I believe to this effect;—“What is the state of your soul?” Perhaps it never would embarrass *you* to answer that enquiry;—but the mischief is—that they, who are most ready to answer it either generally or in detail, are the least acquainted with the state of their souls, and therefore the most unfit to answer it.—You acknowledge indeed elsewhere, that “persons of *extreme sensibility* may possibly be embarrassed” by the custom. But believe me, I consider that, as the smallest of the evils resulting

from it. Nor had I that in view at all, when I observed that many, who attend these meetings and are kept honest and simple in heart, are often made miserable by them.—I spoke of a misery arising—not from embarrassment in declaring their experience before others—but from an honest consciousness that *they* are not as they hear others say they are,—and have not that impassioned experience, which is talked of all around them.

When you say that Dr. Woodward's testimony in favour of the English Societies, is *strictly applicable to the present case*, you really seem to have persuaded yourself into a belief that the meetings of those Societies were any thing like the Methodist Class-meetings:—and yet no one who has ever been present at the latter, and who reads the quotation from Dr. Woodward adduced by yourself, can seriously suppose it to be applicable at all;—unless he suppose that, because religious meetings—conducted in one way—are very profitable, it therefore follows that religious meetings—conducted in a way altogether different—must be so too. Christians acquainted with each others cases—“partly” as the Doctor says, “by their familiar conversations, and partly from their own experience”—occasionally admonish and speak one to another in their meetings, and find it profitable. Can you really suppose, Sir, that this proves, the expediency of meetings, in which all are statedly required to speak about *themselves* and their own experience?

Your third argument is borrowed from the beneficial effects, which you attribute to the Class-meetings of the Methodists; and from the continuance and prosperity of their Society—for more than 60 years.—No very long period, Sir:—especially if we consider that, for more than 50 years of that period, the founder of the Society lived to superintend it, with an influence and authority which effectually kept together all the parts of his system;—and that in the short interval since his death, important

changes—(some of them not of the most desirable nature)—have been introduced into it in England, and still greater changes attempted. But waving this---to make your argument of any force, it would be necessary to shew---that the beneficial effects, which you so strongly assert, have arisen from *that part* of the Methodistic discipline, which I reprobate—the weekly communications that all the members make of the state of their souls ;—and have not rather been produced by other circumstances in their constitution, in spite of the pernicious tendency of this practice. If Methodism had done all, that you feel yourself bound to attest, it would afford no reason why I should not admonish them of what is wrong : and before I am charged with unwarrantable severity of animadversion, the particular principles and customs on which I animadvert ought to be vindicated from scripture, or shewn to be the real cause of acknowledged good.

But when, among the effects of Methodism, you reckon—“ the greatest number of the *most truly religious* people that you have met with,” and as great a quantity of “ *true Piety* towards God” as any religious institution in modern times has produced,—I must pause, and enquire what is your standard of *true* religion and of *true* piety. Mine is the Bible : and to that I have appealed. I acknowledge no religion or piety as *true*, but that, which has the *true* GOD for its object ; and it is in his word that he has made known his name and character. Upon this subject I shall have occasion to write more at large in my fourth letter.—That the Methodistic discipline has excited—and is well calculated to excite—much of *some kind* of religious zeal and pious fervour, I am certain :—so have many religious institutions, which were not even nominally Christian. And I know it is a popular notion that—provided there is much religion and piety—it matters little of what kind they are.—If so, the *devotees* of all sects are equally

right. But if not, it remains to be examined of *what kind*—whether true or false—the piety and religion are, which you so much admire in the Methodists..

But there is another class of effects, which you take notice of, as arising from the spread of Methodism, that I most readily acknowledge:—(though I would not join with you in the very strong assertion that nothing superior of the kind has yet appeared in any portion of *human Society*, or in any stage of *human civilization* ;—for I remember what is declared to have appeared in the Primitive Church—Acts ii. 42—47. & iv. 32, 35.)—I mean the practical effects in the production of “ Characters of the most substantial worth,” and “ respectable Members of Society.” In a *civil* view, sobriety and decency—moral integrity and conscientiousness—are of no inconsiderable importance ; and if it were as a *Politician* that I considered the Methodist Society, I might rest satisfied with seeing that it has been productive of such effects. But I am bold to say, that these effects—while they will necessarily take place wherever real christianity prevails—may be produced without it ; and that what is unscriptural and antichristian in the Methodistic discipline and principles, rather counteracts than promotes them.

In this part of your letter, you keep out of view all those *circumstances* in their Class-meetings, upon which I had particularly animadverted, and consider them in the light of weekly interviews for Christian fellowship—against which I should be so far from dropping a word, that I have a much higher view of their importance than you seem to take. That Christians should assemble themselves together for the purpose of mutual edification, I consider not merely as a matter of peculiar expediency to the *lower* classes of society,—but of divine obligation upon all. For such meetings scripturally conducted none of the *refinements* of social life in the higher classes can be a succedaneum ; nor are they ever

represented in scripture as designed to be a substitute for the *rude revelry* of social intercourse in the lower ranks. They are among the appointed ordinances of the great Head of the Church, for *all* its Members, whereby their fellowship one with another in him their common Lord is avowed and maintained—their brotherly affection invigorated—and all the graces of the spirit exercised and strengthened under his blessing. But what I deny is that the Methodist Class-meetings are *scripturally conducted*: and however they may have contributed with the rest of Mr. Wesley's institutions to benefit the state, I assert that—instead of tending (as you say) to keep the consciences of men “sensible and tender”—they eminently tend either to harden their consciences in a false peace, or to mislead and perplex them.

But from the utility of those meetings, you go on in the fourth place to assert their necessity to the existence of the Methodist Society. “Such a society,” you say, “could only exist by being interesting; and to be so it must have an object: they must meet to do something suitable to their design, or the whole would sink into inanity.”—I am curious to know how the Methodists will relish this defence of their Class-meetings. Yet I really believe, Sir, that in this you have told the true cause, which makes their leaders so attached to this part of Mr. Wesley's institution; and you have only told more plainly what I intimated (as I thought less offensively) in my Expostulatory Address,—where I acknowledged that these meetings are *peculiarly adapted to keep them together as a body*.

But let us look this argument a little in the face. “Such a Society could only exist by being interesting.” Do you not here, Sir, tacitly give up their body as a *Christian Society*, and consider it as indebted for its existence to the natural operation of physical means—just as a literary or political club?—A *Christian Society*, formed on *Christian principles*, requires for its existence the use of none

but the Christian means—prescribed in the word of God ; and these will *interest* its members—so long as they walk in the spirit of Christ. But the Methodist Society requires for its existence something more—to make it sufficiently *interesting* to its Members ; and this additional *something* of human invention—(because it must be something suitable to their design—that is—of a *religious* aspect, and therefore must not be reading fairy tales or any thing else that interests the members of societies not professedly *religious*)—*this religious something* has been discovered by the *sagacity* of their founder in the practice of telling each other weekly *what the state of their Souls is*.—Pardon me, Sir, for saying plainly that I am persuaded they would be often much more innocently employed in reading fairy tales,—though that would not have answered the “*pious purpose*” of forming a religious institution.

You speak of “ the guidance of some one discreet director” at those meetings. Alas ! Sir,—you seem to have written without any recollection of the Methodist Society, or the mode of its proceedings.—According to that mode it is *impossible* in the nature of things that their Class-leaders should correspond with the description of character you suppose them possessed of.

What is the first thing at which the preachers aim, in any place to which they come ?—The formation of a class —After sermon, when the congregation is about to be dismissed, those are exhorted to wait who have “ a desire to save their souls.” —The call is a very general one—perhaps co-extensive with those who acknowledge that they have Souls to be saved.—Some wait from curiosity—some from serious emotions—some from a bashfulness which makes them loth to incur the appearance of being so profane—as to have *no desire to save their souls*. The preacher proceeds to expatiate on the advantages of the Methodistic discipline —especially their Class-meetings : he tells them

perhaps his own experience, and ascribes the happiness of his state to the benefit derived from Mr. Wesley's Class-meetings: he tells them of thousands of others who have derived equal benefit with himself; and scruples not to assure them that, if they expect to be *altogether Christians*, they must overcome their reluctance to the institution of Class-meetings.—That reluctance he confidently traces to carnal motives of worldly shame—or fear—or love of sin.—He reads to them the rules of the Society, and appeals to them whether they are not very good rules. If he can thus persuade—I will say if he can thus trepan any to give in their names as Members, he rejoices over *them* as the real subjects of divine grace, who only need to be faithful to what they have received by a steady adherence to Methodism:—he returns God thanks in their behalf, and prays for the awakening and conversion of others,—that is—for their joining the Society.—Thus a class is formed; and one of them is appointed Class-leader, to be the spiritual director of the rest under the preacher; and he is armed for the office with some controversial pieces of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Fletcher.

I knew such an one appointed in a village with which I was well acquainted: and what were the qualifications that recommended him?—He was more talkative—and more self confident—and in a little more easy circumstances than the rest who gave in their names. As to scriptural Christianity, I have reason to believe that he was more ignorant of its first principles than many:—but—he had picked up some vague idea of Methodistic religion, as consisting of instantaneous impulses and impressions, and new revelations. I remember my attempting to engage his ear, about that period, to some of the important truths of the Bible: and I remember well how he cut me short.—“ Ah! Sir,”—said the poor man—“ I only know that it is never right with us till *something* comes—like—like—like a clap of thunder.”

Say not, Sir, that I argue upon a solitary instance. In the nature of things, the course adopted for the formation of Class-meetings—and the selection of Class-leaders,—*must* render such instances, in various shades of degree, awfully common. My own opportunities of observing the characters of the Class leaders have been—perhaps not so numerous as yours—but sufficiently numerous to warrant the conclusion, that they are commonly selected for qualifications which make them likely to promote—instead of counteracting—the worst evils in those meetings:—for a bigotted attachment to the Methodistic System—a facility and forwardness to argue in its defence—a heat of imagination and precipitancy of judgment, uncorrected by any scriptural views of divine truth—either doctrinal or preceptive.

Indeed a scriptural believer in the situation of a Class-leader—would have to combat so many errors, and to set his face against so many evils in their meetings (if he faithfully discharged his duty)—that I cannot well conceive—as long as the society is what it is—how he could be allowed to continue long in the post:—and the more informed his judgment became from the word of God, the more clearly he would discover that no efforts of his could remedy the mischiefs of a custom intrinsically pernicious—the custom of calling on the members indiscriminately, and weekly, to declare before each other their experience and the state of their souls;—a custom that originates in ignorance at once of the varied deceitfulness and corruptions of the human heart, and of the nature and character of the work of Grace—a custom that must kindle and spread the flame of false and fanatical religion—*whoever* were the directors of their meetings;—while, at the same time, I consider the character of their actual directors to be so opposite to that discretion which you attribute to them—(I mean by discretion here—

scriptural wisdom)—as to constitute in itself a distinct and additional evil of no small magnitude:

To you, Sir, who appear to look upon the nature and ground of religious feelings as of so little importance—provided they be fervid and generally *religious*,—the Methodist Class-leaders may appear sufficiently qualified to exercise that kind of pastoral office which they are called to:—for certainly they are well qualified to work on the feelings of the people, and train them up to zealous Methodism,—much better qualified for this than so many apostles would be. But I do call upon any Christians among the Methodists, who may read these pages, and who acknowledge the essential importance of *scriptural* religion, to consider with seriousness and to consider with candour—(though I know that I am attacking one of their strongest holds of prejudice)—the qualifications which ought to be possessed by those who undertake the office of spiritual guides to others; and the awful consequences which must result from the absence of those qualifications in the leaders of their Class-meetings: to consider what false views of scripture—what deadly errors must thus be weekly disseminated, and how the minds of the poor bewildered people must be “corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus.”

You charge me, Sir, with having made suppositions, in what I wrote upon the Methodist Class-meetings, which I could not be justified in making without “the miraculous discernment of spirits.”—Let any person attentively read the suppositions I have made in my Address; and—unless he be grossly ignorant of scripture and of the human heart—I am not afraid that he will consider that charge as justly lying against me. To warrant those suppositions, nothing more is requisite than some acquaintance with the views of the human heart—its deceitfulness and corruptions—which are given in the word of that God, who “knows what is in man.”

Nay, Sir, to imagine that these suppositions *must* not, in numerous instances, be realized—would be to assert the continual interposition of that kind of miracle, which we have no ground for expecting—in order to prevent the necessary tendency of the practice which I reprobate.

I have supposed that in the Class-meetings there are “those who have no *real* experience in religion at all;” and have asserted that they are “brought forward to declare their experience.” The latter you do not attempt to deny; though you strive to cover it. The former—no Christian Methodist will deny. Every Christian knows that there is no *real* experience in religion, till the sinner—naturally under the power of darkness and unbelief,—dead in sins, and alienated from God,—is enlightened—quickened and converted to God by his spirit of power, giving him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This change the Methodists do not even pretend that all their members have received—immediately on their introduction to a class. Nay, there are very few instances in which this change is supposed to have taken place, till some time *after* they have become Members of the Society.

I repeat it then—no longer in the form of a supposition (though even that was so offensive to you)—but now as an assertion of an indisputable fact,—that not only some of them, but a vast majority of them are brought forward to declare their *experience* in religion and the *state of their souls*, at a time when they have no real experience at all, and when their state is that of unconverted and unbelieving sinners—yet under the dominion of a carnal mind that is blind and “deceitful above all things,” and “enmity against God.” And I repeat my assertion, that this practice is—but an “apparatus for drilling them either into hypocrisy or self-deceit.”—Nor am I apprehensive that the assertion ever can be refuted; though its warning voice may be drowned by the outcry of—*severity* of judgment—pretensions to

the *miraculous discernment of spirits*—assuming the *divine prerogative* of searching the hearts, &c. And I know so well how few readers think while they read, that I am aware that the person—who raises this outcry—will appear to have the best of the argument. But no matter;—a few may hear the voice of truth, and to them it will be profitable.

I proceeded to illustrate the way, in which I think such meetings eminently calculated to drill—either into hypocrisy or self-deceit—those who enter them without any really Christian experience—(for of such throughout that passage I expressly treated):—and I illustrated that way by drawing a picture of the progressive steps of delusion, through which they may be supposed to pass: and concluded with the observation that “*such a course*”—a very awful one indeed in all its stages—“is the natural consequence of *such Meetings*.”—Now, Sir, how do you meet these observations of mine? Is it by attempting to shew that such is not their natural consequence? Not at all: but—quoting different passages from the *case* that I described—you exclaim at the strong colouring of the awful picture, as if I took upon me to pronounce on the individual *instances* in which it is realized. Thus—when I describe the *case* of persons—brought forward at those weekly meetings to tell their experience, without having any real experience in religion—retailing the gleanings of the phraseology which they hear around them,—and, while they utter the most humiliating complaints, secretly filled with a proud satisfaction at having complained so well and spoken so humbly;—you ask me—“how can you or any mortal *assert* this concerning his fellow-mortals?”—How indeed, Sir, can any one assert this at the time of any particular individual? But concerning which of my fellow-mortals have I asserted it? Not one.—I have indeed described a very dreadful and very natural *case*: and your question would be as

apposite to one of THEOPHRASTUS's characters, as to that which I have drawn.

If you think that the case which I have described, exceeds the malignity of *human nature*,—I tell you honestly that it does not exceed the malignity of mine. If you think that such cases are not the *natural consequence* of such meetings as you contend for,—allow me to say that you ought to have disproved the tendency which I attributed to them, instead of transforming the description which I drew of their natural effect into *assertions* concerning individuals, and then gravely appealing to the *candid reader*—“ whether he does not think that such assertions have much more appearance of prejudice, than of dispassionate observation.”—Far am I, Sir, —in making this remark—from imputing to you any thing like wilful misrepresentation. I know too well what writers are unintentionally led into, when they take up the defence of a weak cause against its assailant, to impute that hastily to any: and I have the pleasure of knowing so much personally of *you*, as would not allow me under any circumstances to suppose you capable of it. Most gladly would I leave this and other misrepresentations undetected—if the importance of the subject permitted me to let your pamphlet remain unanswered.

You perceive, Sir, that you are mistaken when you tacitly attribute inconsistency to me, where you observe that—on *second thoughts*—I deprecate my being understood to accuse *all*, who talk of their experience at such meetings. In my *first thoughts*, where you accuse me of such severity of judgment, the severity of judgment fell upon an unscriptural practice—the perniciousness of which I illustrated by describing the course of hypocrisy or self-deceit—through which it naturally tends to lead. And in this there was nothing inconsistent with my subsequent declaration—that I did not mean to say, that

all ran such a course, who adopted the practice; though I do think it a miracle of grace where any escape it:—nor is there, as you supposed, any thing in this declaration that ought to have restrained my foregoing censures.

You lament, Sir, that I “should have spoken of such a body of people”—as the Methodists—“so very much in the style of their grossest and most vulgar opponents, as to talk of *THEIR only exchanging*, perhaps, the sins of drunkenness and swearing for the sins of *spiritual pride, censoriousness and hypocrisy*”—(the word *censoriousness* is by mistake printed in your letter *covetousness*—a sin which has no immediate connection with the matter in hand.)—This is a heavy charge, Sir. A Christian and a Christian minister talking so of any *body* of professing Christians—would indeed speak of them in a very unwarrantable style; though perhaps not precisely in the style of “*their grossest and most vulgar opponents.*” If I had fallen into such an evil—so unbecoming my profession—and so unsuitable to the task which I assumed of admonishing others, I hope I should have grace neither to attempt repelling your reprobation, nor to pass it over in silence:—I hope I would take shame to myself,—acknowledge my fault,—and make the best amends in my power, by owning the justness of your castigation. But I must add, that I plead—not guilty—to your charge; and I assert with confidence, that I shall prove it to be without any shadow of foundation.

The passage, which you profess to quote from my Address, and upon which you found the charge, is taken from that paragraph—throughout which I am shewing, how the Methodist Class-meetings are calculated to drill those, who have no real experience in religion at all, either into hypocrisy or self deceit:—and following *such persons* through the various stages of that course, which I observe is the natural consequence of such meetings, I describe one of them at length as having got that in-

stantaneous feeling of religious joy, which they are taught by Mr Wesley's system to call *justification*.—I then go on:—“the *poor creature* is then rejoiced over and rejoices over himself:—he is given to understand that all he needs now is to keep up those feelings, and to go on in the same way to attain what is called *sanctification*;—he is questioned weekly as to his progress in this effort, or perhaps is employed to question others:—and if he only continue regular in attending his class, and precise in the observance of Methodist discipline, no doubt is entertained by himself or others of his Christianity:—while he has only exchanged perhaps, the sins of drunkenness and swearing, for the sins of spiritual pride, censoriousness and hypocrisy.” The latter words you quote detached from their connexion:—in quoting them you change the word *he* to the plural number, and represent it as spoken of the *body* of the Methodists;—and thus you support your charge against me of speaking of them in the style of their *grossest and most vulgar opponents*. It may be necessary here to repeat, that in thus plainly repelling your charge, I have not the remotest idea of charging you with any thing wilfully unfair.—It was inattention—it was precipitancy—it was over-zeal for the cause which you had espoused. But it will afford me great satisfaction, if you should be led to consider more seriously the mischievousness of exerting ingenuity and talents, for the purpose of screening any religious body from salutary and important admonition. Some such play of genius may be comparatively admissible, where divine matters are not concerned: but indeed where they are, I think it is a very awful evil.

You say that I ought to have limited my condemnation to the *custom* of Class-meetings, and “not so broadly extended it to the persons who pursue it.”—Now let us see how far I have extended—what you call my *condemnation*—to the per-

sions who pursue the custom.—What do I say of them?—I say that, in spite of its most injurious tendency, “ I trust that *many* attend those meetings, who are kept honest and simple in heart;”—but that, “ I have met *some*, and read of others, who to *my judgment* gave evidence of being in various stages of that course,”—that self-deceiving course, which I had just before described. Allow me to ask, Sir, is this extending my condemnation either *broadly* or *presumptuously* to the persons who attend Class-meetings?—After the maturest consideration of your reproof, I do not find that I can consistently with candour introduce any additional limitation: nor do I think that what I have said of those persons violates any precept of Scripture, or trenches in the least the divine prerogative—of “ pronouncing on men’s hearts.”

That I was kept on my guard against this, while I wrote, you may perceive from the observation, which I immediately subjoined,—that “ I am not fond of deciding on the state or character of individuals—*where there is any room for doubt.*”—I suppose, Sir, you will scarcely say that there may not be cases, in which those—who believe the word of God—can have no room to doubt about the state of others, as a very awful one. Now, what is the only case of that kind among the Methodists, upon which I have ventured to pronounce? The state of those—“ who avow that they have attained that same perfection in holiness, in consequence of which they live *without sin in thought, word, or deed;*”—who imagine that all principle of *evil* has been exterminated from within them, and that they have no longer any flesh—or carnal nature—that “ *lusteth against the spirit.*” And of all such I have said—that I can have no doubt that “ they are in the last and most awful stage”—of that self-deceiving course which I described;—indeed I think it probable they have each gone through the preceding stages of it, before they could arrive at this deadly

delusion) :—and I have assigned the reasons from scripture, upon which that certainty is founded.—Not one of these reasons do you even attempt to refute throughout your letter; nor take the least notice of their pretensions to this *sinless* state: but content yourself with declaring—that I ought not to have extended my condemnation “so broadly.”

You say that I think “*no truly experienced Christian*” would dare to attempt speaking of himself, and of his walk with God, at periodical intervals. I am sorry to observe, Sir, that here again you change my expression. My expression is—that “*the most truly experienced Christians*” will not: and by the change, slight as it is, you represent me as at one time denying that any of the Methodists have any truly Christian experience, which I have elsewhere avowed my hope that not a few of them posseſſ.

I briefly mentioned one reason for that assertion, about the most truly experienced Christian,—namely—“that *he* is best able to say how nice and trying a matter it is, to speak before others of himself and of his walk with God.” I intimated another reason,—namely—that it is not at all times he will “see it *expedient* to speak upon the subject.”—Are you, Sir, prepared to deny either of these reasons, upon which the opinion is founded that you dissent from? Do you really think that the speaking of ourselves—of our religious state and course and experience, is a matter so safe—so easy,—that there is little or no danger connected with the periodical practice of the custom?—or no such danger, as calls for all the wisdom and the watchfulness of the most experienced Christian, when he occasionally does see it expedient to speak upon the subject?—that it is a matter in which not only *he* may at *any* time safely engage, but even the least experienced Christian,—nay men who have no Christian experience at all?—So you appear to think, by taking up the defence of the practice of Class-meetings: for if you maintain not all this, the practice falls to the ground as indefen-

sible. But if you really and deliberately think this —pardon me, Sir, for saying that you have very little knowledge of the human heart ; and for appealing from you to all the Christians in that body whose advocate you are.

You say that “*hypocrites* may certainly abuse the practice.” Alas! Sir ; that deception by which we purposely assume a false *gairb* in order to impose upon *others*,—which is commonly called *hypocrisy*,—is but a small part of the deceitfulness of the human heart, and a form in which it rarely appears, —in comparison of those various deceptions by which we impose upon *ourselves*. Of these deceptions indeed we know little or nothing, till we have that light of divine truth which enables us to detect the evils that are within us ; because we are till then under their power : and the longer we walk in that light, the more we shall discover of those evils, and the more jealous shall we be of ourselves. The whole practice of the Methodist *Class-meetings* is eminently adapted to fall in with all the *self-deceiving* tendencies of our hearts ; and just to give a new and a worse direction,—though a more specious one, —to our natural vanity and self-love.

But perhaps, relinquishing the safety of the practice—its safety to the individual who speaks of himself,—you are disposed to maintain its *expediency* to those who hear him. This at least cannot vindicate the utility of their *Class-meetings*, where all are in their turn speakers about themselves, as well as hearers about others. In their *love feasts*, I know those who do not choose to speak are left at liberty to be silent. But I would be glad to know in what that profitableness consists—of hearing statedly about the inward course of others. The Methodists rate it very high ; because by it their feelings are often strongly wrought on, and the whole machine of their system effectually worked. But this will not prove its profitableness to a *Bible Christian*.—Is the experience of divine things, which is declared, *Script-*

tural? or is it not? If it be not, you will scarcely assert the expediency of having it put forward as true. And if it be,—do not the truths of scripture which coincide with that experience, contain all that is profitable in it?—The Christian, from his experience, will be the better qualified to state—enforce—and apply those truths:—and let Christians thus qualified—“able to exhort and admonish one another”—speak to their mutual edification. But may they not do this without bringing forward *themselves* and their own state as individuals?—Or do the truths of God lose their profitableness, when not declared, in connection with the cases of individual professors? To suppose this, is to take those truths off the basis of divine authority, and rest them on human assertion:—and the consequence has been—the currency in the Methodist Society of experiences, cried up as something wonderfully fine, which—tried by the test of God’s word—would be found destitute of the first principles of the experience of a Christian, or contradictory to them.

Is the body of experience,—standing on sure record in all the Scriptures, and especially in the book of Psalms,—so incomplete—so insufficient for illustrating and enforcing the truths of God, that its deficiency must be weekly supplied, and too often the whole of its tenor set aside, by the experience of those who are—or are not—believers of the gospel now?—Let not the person, who is to succeed * you in replying to my Address, tell me of the fondness for such accounts in other bodies, beside the Methodists. I know it, and I lament it; for I know the

* Since writing the above, another reply to my Expository Address has made its appearance in this city, by a person signing himself—*The Ulster Herd man*. How long it may have been circulated in the country, where it was printed, I know not; as it bears the date of February last.—This pamphlet affords as fair a specimen of *thorough Methodism*, as I could desire; and from one so well versed in it, that his quotations from Mr Fletcher, are scarcely to be distinguished in style, or spirit, or argument—from much of his

mischiefs of it:—though I believe the abuse is in no other body carried to such a height and extent as in the Society to which I directed my Expostulatory Address. But his task will be shortened and simplified,—though perhaps not facilitated,—by recollecting, that I think myself not concerned with any arguments, that are derived from the practices—or assertions—or opinions of *Men* ;—with none but such as are derived from the word of *God*.

I am glad to hear from you, Sir, that the *tumultuous assemblies*, of which I briefly took notice, are disapproved of by “almost all the old and experienced members” of the Society:—and I suppose the preachers, who encourage them, are not to be considered as of that class—though I know that some of these are men of the greatest note in the connection. We shall see by the event, whether the Society does not tolerate and countenance such practices. Certainly I had every right to consider it as doing so, while they are not avowedly discountenanced in the Society, and are avowedly encouraged by some of its principal leaders:—and I own that those who are afraid “of repressing *pious ardours*,” by stopping the proceedings of these assemblies, seem to know little of what *Christian Piety* is.—But I fear you mistake the reason why they have not been stopped. One of those meetings, where the preacher succeeds in agitating the poor people, and the wildfire of those “*pious ardours*” runs well through the assembly, is the successful means of gaining more new members to the Society, than twenty others more decently conducted.—I shall say no more on this subject at present; but will indulge the hope that the weight of your opinion may excite the in-

own writing. I shall make no unnecessary delay in attending to the antagonist, and to another who appeared before him as a *Vindicator of Human Nature*—I do not expect a speedy termination of the controversy. Would that it might excite more serious and general attention! My Respondents however must be content with being taken notice of in the order, in which their pieces may appear.

terference of "almost all the old and experienced members."

I have thus, Sir, replied to the first 35 pages of your letter, in which you remark on the first 14 pages of my Address,—and on a very small part of them. I am glad to find myself arrived at what I consider the most important—though it be the shortest part of your letter,—that in which you treat of doctrines;—partly (as in the four following pages) to vindicate the Methodists from the charge of error in doctrine, which I advanced in my Address,—and partly to retort a similar charge in different instances upon me. Here we have before us a subject of unspeakable moment indeed; in comparison of which the reputation of individual men, or bodies of men, vanishes into insignificance. Here—it is to me indeed of great consequence not to be found opposing truth, or maintaining error: but—on which ever side the truth may lie—the knowledge of it will be promoted by the serious discussion of the subject.

Entering on this part of your remarks, you say—"I think the deepest ground of your dislike remains yet to be adverted to."—You conjectured rightly. But let me tell you *why* it is, that the deepest ground of my dislike lies in the Methodistic doctrines. It is because their false and unscriptural doctrines are at the root of all the other evils, to which I directed their attention;—while many of those evils—(by a kind of reciprocal action that is not infrequent)—encrease the cause from which they spring.

You are mistaken, however, when you intimate that I have formed my estimate of the character and conduct of the Methodists from my sentiments of their doctrines.—In the former, the existence of the evils, which I have animadverted on, is a matter of *fact*; which I do not infer *a priori*, but know as any other matter of fact is to be known:—and their malignant nature I estimate by the same rule of

scripture, by which I detect the errors of their doctrine.—Here there is not, as you suppose, any thing like an inversion of our Lord's rule—“*By their fruits ye shall know them :*”—while that rule indeed would warrant a believer, who did not know the Methodist doctrines, to conclude that there must be some great erroneousness in them, from the practices that prevail in their Society.

But you seem, in that passage, to intimate that you would approve of an application of our Lord's rule, against which I must protest ;—of an inference that the doctrines which men hold are good, or good enough, if the fruits in their conduct appear good. Thus—many would bar all examination of Mr. Wesley's or Mr. Fletcher's system of doctrine, on the ground that it cannot be very wrong—inasmuch as it has produced so much *general piety* and extensive *usefulness* : and will quote with you the rule—“*by their fruits ye shall know them.*” But they altogether misapply the rule, and fall in with the infidel principle of the poet—“*For modes of Faith let graceless bigots fight—His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.*”—If the faith which a man avows be radically unscriptural, I am obliged to consider all the fairest fruits that appear in him as but *apparently* good : nor could I ever be so certain, on other grounds, that they are genuine—as I am from the word of God that the root from which they spring is evil, and therefore that the fruit—however specious—is corrupt. Our Lord's rule never was designed to convert the *seeming* piety or usefulness of men into a standard of doctrinal truth, in place of the revealed word of God : but it was intended to admonish his disciples against those false teachers, the corruption of whose lives should betray the evil of their inward principles. This rule—rightly applied—teaches us from the *acknowledged* evil of the fruits, to estimate the corruption of the tree that bears them ; but is wholly perverted ; when applied to infer the goodness of the tree—in opposition to the

testimony of Scripture—from the *seeming* fairness of its fruits.—The importance of scripture-principles, and the wide mischiefs arising from the misapplication of them, must plead my apology for this digression; which has been suggested, however, by your expressions in this passage,—as well as by the tenor of your arguments in other parts of your letter.

In the next paragraph, you proceed to vindicate the Methodistic doctrine of *sanctification*, and to shew that I have misrepresented it. I had stated—that “the Methodistic idea of *sanctification* is, in plain English, this: that the corrupt nature of man becomes in believers less and less corrupt, till at length it becomes wholly good—perfectly purified from all evil,—and this *instantaneously*.” In opposition to this idea I asserted—that “according to scripture, it is not any part of the work of grace to *mend* our fallen nature.” (This word *mend* seems to have displeased you;—as if I charged the Methodists with using “an *awkward* expression:” but if you read again the passage, where it occurs in my Address, you will find that I nowhere impute the use of it to the Methodists,—but merely employ it as a very intelligible expression for the idea which I am opposing.)—I go on—“*that* nature—that old “nature—called in scripture the *flesh*,—is as bad—“as wholly evil—in a believer, as in an unbeliever; “as bad in the most established believer as in the “weakest;—as bad in Paul the Apostle—just finishing his course, and ready to receive the crown of “Righteousness, as in Saul of Tarsus—a blasphemous and a persecutor of the Church of Christ.”

Thus far, is a plain statement of two opinions, in direct opposition one to the other. Upon the latter of them, which I have asserted to be scriptural, you say not a word throughout your whole pamphlet—but you attempt to shew that in the former I have *misrepresented* the opinion of the Methodists.—Am I to understand by this, that their

opinion is really coincident with that, which I have here asserted to be the opinion warranted by scripture? It would really, Sir, give me great satisfaction to think illus. But I do fear that neither theirs nor yours is so.

But let us see how you shew—that I have misrepresented their idea.—Why, you say that—by our *fallen nature* the Methodists evidently do not mean “*our contracted depravity*.” Truly, Sir, I have no where intimated that they do. I have throughout supposed that they mean—not the *depravity*—but the *thing depraved*:—and the question, as I have stated it, is—whether—by the work of grace in sanctification—that *thing* becomes less and less depraved, being progressively mended or improved, till at length it becomes wholly good;—or, as I have asserted, continues to the last of our course here *wholly evil*.

But, after denying—what I never asserted or intimated—that by our fallen nature they mean “*our contracted depravity*,” you add—“but they mean the *very substance* of the human mind.”—Excuse me, Sir, for saying no more upon that, than that it is explaining a very intelligible expression by one much less intelligible: for that neither you nor I have any notion whatsoever of the *very substance* of the human mind, distinct from its qualities and operations,—or—what in common language is called—its *nature*.

You go on to observe—that human nature is “but another word for the *man himself*.”—Well, we have now got back to another very intelligible expression,—and I am glad to settle in it for awhile:—only observing that, when I adopt your phrase, I speak of the *man himself* according to *his own* nature (because in the believer there are two distinct and, as I assert, opposite natures—*his own*, and the “*divine nature*” or spirit, of which he is made a partaker through faith in Christ in consequence of his union with him);—and that it was in this very

sense, which you accuse me of overlooking, that I use the word *flesh*—or our fallen nature—in my statement. This you may perceive, by looking again at that repetition of it which offended you, where I say—“ it would be much more gratifying “ to the pride of our hearts, to think that however “ bad *we* may be naturally, yet *we* are not so bad “ but that *we* may be *mended*; and it is the gene-“ ral idea of all men—the most careless and the “ most profane.” Surely this is precisely the same thing, as if I had said—according to your expres-*sion*—“ that however bad the *man himself* may be naturally, yet he is not so bad but that the *man himself* may be *mended*.”

Now, Sir, you say that one of my arguments—(the only one indeed of which you take any notice)—against the Methodistic idea of sanctification, as consisting in the *progressive improvement of our fallen nature*—is a “ mere play on words;” and this because I do not use the expression *fallen nature* in the same sense, in which they do, it being with them “ but another word for the *man himself*.” If this charge be founded, all appearance of force will vanish from my argument, and the “ play on words” will be exposed, as soon as we substitute your expression for that which I employed. Let us try:—I am not apprehensive of the event.—“ Indeed if the *man him-
self* became during his christian course less and less evil, the believer would have less and less occasion to watch against *himself*—to *deny himself*: and if at any period of it the *man himself* became purged from all evil, it would then become a christian duty not to *deny himself*.” Really, Sir, whatever force the argument had before, or appeared to have, it appears to possess all the same force still. I have therefore yet to learn why you assert it to be “ a mere play on words.”

But you mistake my object in the argument, when you give me credit for—“ some iugenuity, in thus turning upon the Methodists the charge of

Antinomian doctrine." I would be ashamed of imitating them in any such perverted ingenuity :—nor is it in Antinomian doctrine to say, that it will not be necessary for us to *deny ourselves*, whenever we ourselves become purged from all evil. That, Sir, will be the case of glorified Saints in Heaven ; and therefore the *denial of themselves* is one of the spiritual exercises, which—without any antinomianism—will have no place there.—But the object of my argument is to shew, that their idea of sanctification must be unscriptural, because an unscriptural inference would, not only "almost," but absolutely and necessarily follow from it.

In this argument, there have been two things taken for granted ; which I shall now proceed to state, that my future opponents may see more clearly where they have to look for a point of attack in it—if they can find one. First, that the scriptural precept of *denying ourselves*, implies and is founded on the vitiosity of *our own nature*.—Secondly, that this precept marks the course, to which a believer is called to the last of his continuance in the body.—The former is testified throughout the whole word of God ; though I know that many who admit the precept verbally, but in the pride of their hearts deny the truth on which it is founded, —imagine that they fulfil the precept of *denying themselves*, by a kind of work of supererogation, in forbearing occasionally certain *innocent indulgences* ; —just as they imagine that they observe another christian precept of *mortifying the flesh*, by another work of supererogation, in putting their bodies to unnecessary pain. And all the while these poor souls, puffed up with a false notion of *themselves*, and feeding their self complacency with these denials of a supposed *innocent self*,—are walking after the *flesh*, and not after the *spirit*.

But to " *deny ourselves*" is the same thing as to walk—not after *our own nature* ; and if that nature were not *evil*, we may rest assured that we

would no more be called to deny it, than an angel in Heaven can be called to "deny himself:"—if it were not altogether evil, we would not be called to deny *ourselves*—but only what is evil in ourselves. Or wherefore does the inspired Apostle (Eph. ii. 3.) describe the course, in which they walk who are "dead in trespasses and sins,"—as a course of "fulfilling the desires of the *flesh* and of the mind,"—if the moral propensities of *our own nature* be partly innocent and good, though partly evil?—But what do the scriptures expressly assert of the character of *our own nature*—or the *flesh*? what is its mind? it is "enmity against God."—What is its continual tendency? it "lusteth *against* the spirit"—that good spirit of God, which dwells and reigns in his believing people, and works in them both to will and to do.

I fear, Sir, that some of the Methodists will be ready to think that these and similar passages of scripture, which declare the character of *our flesh* or *fallen nature*, are marked with shades too dark to describe the *man himself*; and will desire to be excused from adopting your interpretation of the expression:—perhaps will desire to affirm that meaning of it, which you have denied to be theirs,—that is, that we are to understand by the *flesh* *our contracted depravity* ;—so reducing all those self abasing truths of the Bible to a simple proposition that *depravity is a depraved thing*. Nor am I surprised that carnal men should be insensible to that *enmity against God* which constitutes their natural character. Sin, reigning in them, reigns as the "power of *darkness* ;" and when the *true God* is presented to their view in the declaration of his gospel,—the very *unbelief* which rejects and opposes that gospel,—while to the enlightened observer it affords the clearest evidence of their character,—is that kind of evidence, by which from the nature of it they cannot be themselves convinced, while they continue under the power of *unbelief*.

Other evidences of a “contracted depravity” almost all men more or less acknowledge; because their natural consciences acknowledge the evil of those workings, in which it manifests itself; and according as they succeed in repressing those workings of it, they are ready to pride themselves in the progress they have made towards *reforming themselves*. Scarcely any, but those who are settled in the delusion of Methodist *perfection*, have their consciences so seared, as to think they have completely succeeded in this task, and that all remnant of a depraved nature is exterminated from within them;—while those very persons who think so, often give the most decisive proof that the carnal mind reigns in them, and is indeed “*enmity against God*,” in the hardihood of blasphemy with which they oppose the truths of the gospel that manifest his name,—denying his perfections with peculiar violence of hostility, and presumptuously arraigning the righteousness of his law and the sovereignty of his grace.

And as our natural *disbelief* of the glorious gospel of God marks the character of *our own nature* or fleshly mind, in our unconverted state,—so when we are brought to the knowledge and belief of the truth, we are born again *not of the will of the flesh*—but *of God*. This *faith* is the continued work of *his* good spirit, in opposition to all the tendencies of *our own*; and produces the “*new mind*” of the spirit—continually opposed by the “*mind of the flesh*” and “*these two are contrary the one to the other*;” the latter not a whit more disposed to God, or capable of producing any good fruit, than it was when we walked after it and fulfilled its desires. In consequence of this the christian,—who “*walks after the spirit*,” and “*lives by the faith of the son of God*,”—lives not after the flesh,—or *his own nature*;—continues to “*deny himself*;”—and while he can say with the apostle—“*I live*,”

—must with the apostle add—“ yet not *I*, but Christ liveth in me.”

This warfare—arising from the *contrariety* of *our own* nature to the divine,—ceases not—(I repeat it)—but with our earthly course. Those who think that, at any period of it, one of their three-fold adversaries has become extinct, by the fleshly nature (their own nature) being *annihilated* or having *changed* its character, and that they have then only to contend and watch and pray against the two remaining foes—the world and the Devil;—they have fallen into one of the most awful snares of the Devil:—amidst all their towering profession of religion, they have yet to learn the first principles of the Gospel of Christ;—and unless God—that God against whose attributes they are often the loudest to blaspheme—“ give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,” this delusion will continue, till they perish in it.

The Methodists are perfectly consistent in maintaining that they arrive at this state, in which *the man himself* or *his own nature* ceases to be evil: for their system sets out with an idea that in consequence of the grace of God—(if *grace* it could be called, which they deny might justly be withheld)—there is such a general *improvement* made in the nature of all men, that they *can* repent and believe the gospel—as they say—*when they please*;—that the powers of *men* to do good are so restored by Christ, that *HE*—does not save any—but puts all in a state of *salvability* (as it is called), in which they may *save themselves*. And then, to be sure, it easily follows that this *improvement* of themselves and their own nature goes on in those, who are *faithful* to what they have received,—till the reformation is complete, and what was never entirely evil becomes altogether *good*. But certainly the advocates for such a system have not yet *pleased* to repent and believe the scriptures: and indeed unless the power of a Spirit opposite to *their own* cast

down those “*imaginings*” and high thoughts, that “*exalt themselves against the knowledge of God*,”—they never will.

By this time, Sir, you may perceive, that when I—“state, in terms of scripture, that believers grow in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour,”—I speak of a work very different from any in which the *man himself* is supposed to be *mended*. In the walk of faith, the old man—or our own nature—remains corrupt as it ever was; and not the less intrinsically and totally corrupt, because “*sin shall not have dominion*” over those, in whom Christ reigns by his spirit, “*who are not under the law, but under grace.*” Rom. vi. 14. And therefore it is that believers are called continually to “*put off the old man*”—to “*mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts*”—to “*deny themselves*,”—and to “*put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*”—in which “*all things are become*”—not *mended*—but “*new.*” 2 Cor. v. 17.

I know that Mr. Wesley and many of his followers interpret the latter expression of scripture, as if it related to those Christians, who are—according to their idea—*perfect*. But it is one of the many instances, in which they pervert the word of God.—“*If any man*”,—says the apostle—“*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away: behold, all things are become new.*” Words cannot more expressly assert this to be the character of *all* who are *in Christ*; and will the Methodists pretend that this is not, in scripture language, synonymous with *all* who are *Christians* indeed—who *believe* in his name?—To be consistent with their interpretation of the text, they should maintain that *none* are Christians but those, who have arrived at this boasted perfection.—This they do not maintain; and the natural inference from their interpretation is, that men may be Christians—(though not *perfect* Christians)—without

Having that mind in which "all things are become new."

Nor does this inference suggest itself merely from this one perversion of scripture, but from all that Methodistic idea of sanctification, against which I have contended. The scriptures testify that, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;"—that "as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God;"—that "hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of *his* spirit." Now his spirit is good—*altogether* good: and the mind of his spirit is, therefore, a mind *universally* tending to him, hating *all* that is contrary to him, to his glory and revealed will,—loving *all* his ways and *all* his truths, as far as they are discovered to us. By these characters, those who profess to be his have continually to try themselves: and while it is no evidence against the reality of their profession, that the mind of the flesh—or *their own nature*—is continually *opposite* to this,—(but rather it is one of the marks of divine teaching that they discover it to be so,)—they can at the same time have no scriptural evidence that their profession is not vain, except so far as they have that mind of the spirit which is *altogether* and *universally* turned to the Lord—as coming from him,—and is opposite to the flesh in *all* its workings.

But, according to the system which represents the work of sanctification as the *gradual reformation* or *improvement* of our own corrupt nature, a mixed mind, partly evil and partly good, is that, according to which even the believer walks, till "the man himself" becomes perfect:—and from such a mind—(absurd no doubt in the very idea of its existence)—what criterion can be borrowed, by which to examine ourselves? What a wide door does this open for all the worst delusions of false hope, which men are otherwise so apt to cherish,—who have not "respect unto *all* the commandments" of God,—

and therefore have no real respect to *any* of them,—who “turn not to the Lord with the *whole* heart, but *feignedly*,” and, by endeavouring to “serve two masters,” prove that they are yet altogether the servants of sin!

And in what a different view must they regard their corruptions, who consider them as the remaining infirmities of a nature—*diseased* indeed but *convalescent*, from the light in which they appear to the believer, who sees in the smallest of them the workings of the same deadly nature—of his sinful flesh—wholly evil and “enmity against God” ---which formerly reigned in him, when he “walked after the course of this world” and was “led captive by Satan at his will,”—from the continued tendency of which, to lead him from the living God, he needs to be continually “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!”

It would be an easy but invidious task, to prove by copious extracts from accounts published by the Methodists of their experience, that their unscriptural view of *sanctification* has had in fact upon many that very influence, which it is calculated to produce; has encouraged them to make little of the evil of their own hearts,—to deny in several instances that breaches of the perfect law of God are *sin*,—to cover them with the extenuating phrase of *infirmities*,—to contend for their innocence,—and where this could not be maintained, to throw the blame off *themselves* upon Satan—in order to support their own pretensions to a nature perfectly purified.—But I forbear.

You observe, Sir, that, as reasonably as I oppose the Methodistic—and indeed popular idea of the *improveableness* of our own nature, and of its being *improved* by divine grace,—I might “accuse the “established Church of error in praying to God to “cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, &c.” on the ground of the scripture having said that “*the thoughts of man’s heart are only evil continually.*”

---I know not any Church, established or not established, which may not use an erroneous expression; or which is of so great sanctity, that the error countenanced by such an expression should be screened from animadversion. Nor is it my business to vindicate every expression in our Liturgy, which however excellent—is of human composition. Would to God that the multitudes, who join in using it, believed the scripture truths, with which it abounds!—But you happen to be rather unlucky in selecting this passage, as exposed to my animadversion. That it is understood by many in a sense similar to that, against which I have protested, ---I believe. But they misunderstand it. And---fairly interpreted—it is so far from being in opposition to the passage of scripture which you quote, that the petition expressed in the one is grounded upon the very truth asserted in the other. Wherefore do we pray that God would—“ by the inspiration of *his* spirit”—(words of too deep significance and close connection, to be left covered by your &c)—“ cleanse the thoughts of our hearts” or make our inward thoughts clean? wherefore but because *our own* spirit is unclean, and incapable of producing any good thoughts;—because it is literally true, that “ the thoughts of man’s heart are “ only evil continually.”

I have done with this important subject: and must reserve the remaining topics for another letter. Mean while I remain,

Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
June 24. 1803.

LETTER IV.

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SIR,

HAVING remarked, in one short paragraph, on my numerous objections to the Methodistic idea of *sanctification*—(with what success the attentive reader of my last letter will judge)—you proceed in the next paragraph, to repel the charges which I brought against their system as deeply erroneous in the doctrine of *justification*. And your reply amounts to this—that upon this point there is no *real* or no *important* difference between them and me; while you guard your readers against supposing that you coincide in sentiments with either of us. I cannot but observe that, in the subsequent part of your letter,—(see for instance pp. 54 & 55.)—you discover so wide a difference between my sentiments on this very subject and those—not of the Methodists only ---but, as you conceive, of all “*sober* Calvinists,” that you appear struck with astonishment how any man can seriously hold the tenets which I avow. Shall I account for the tenor of your reply in the present passage, by supposing that you penned it before you had made the discovery of my sentiments; and afterwards forgot to expunge the statement, that there was little or no difference here between mine and Mr. Wesley's?

But let us examine the proof which you adduce to support this statement. Your words are—"If the Methodists speak of *a day, an hour, a moment*—so do you. *A real believer, you say, from the moment he is made a partaker of that precious faith, &c.*" Such is your first proof of my agreement with the Methodists in the doctrine of justification: they speak of *a moment*, and the word *moment* is to be found in my Expositulatory Address!—They, as I have observed, are taught to ground their persuasion that they are justified, or accepted in the sight of God, on being able to state the day, or hour, or *moment* when they got a sudden feeling of religious peace and joy:—and I have declared my persuasion that a sinner, from the *moment* he really believes the gospel, is as truly prepared for death as ever he can be.—(see the two passages to which you allude—Exp. Add. pp. 28 & 29.—2d edition)—And hence you conclude that—"if there be any difference" between them and me on the doctrine of *justification*, "it is not a great deal more than verbal!" I believe, Sir, you are sufficiently sensible that proofs—equally conclusive—might be derived from every word, which they and I ever use in common.

Your next argument is very near akin to the first, and not a whit more forcible. It is this;—the Methodists speak of sudden *feelings* of divine peace and joy:—and I also have stated that faith is productive of *feelings* the most blessed.—Hence you may certainly conclude that, in opposing the Methodistic errors, I do not mean to contend for an unfeeling religion: but by what rule of logical deduction you can conclude from it that *we agree on the doctrine of justification*, I am at a loss to conjecture. Neither they nor I conceive that a Christian is destitute of spiritual feelings:—therefore you infer that our sentiments upon a perfectly different subject coincide! The subject of religious *feelings* I have handled at some length in my second letter: and perhaps it has convinced you before this, how little agreement

there is—even on that point—between the Methodists and me.

Your third argument, to prove the resemblance of our opinions on the doctrine of justification, deserves to be more seriously considered: because it involves a very dangerous mistake as to the meaning of a scriptural truth. You say—“if the Methodists talk of words of scripture, as if spoken to them with an audible voice,—does this amount to more (when received with any *candour* of construction) than what is implied in that assertion of yours ---that none will obey the gospel but those to whom it comes not in word only, but *in demonstration and in power?*” Sir,—in the construction of *truth*, it amounts to something much less, and to something altogether different. *My* assertion amounts to this—that sinners are naturally so blinded in their understandings to the things of God, and so incredulous about them, that—(notwithstanding the clearness with which his truths are testified in the Scripture, and notwithstanding all the evidences—internal and external—which corroborate the testimony, and leave those who reject it without excuse)—none will discern the glory of these truths, or be persuaded of their reality, but those to whom the Spirit of God accompanies his word,—giving them to understand what he declares in the Gospel of his Son, and convincing them of its truth. All who are thus “given to believe” the gospel, that gospel declares to be *justified* or accepted in the sight of God.

But what is it that a supposed voice from heaven gives a *Methodist* to believe, when he is taught to think himself justified? The Gospel? No such thing:—he is considered and dealt with by his spiritual guides, as believing just the same system of religious truth, before and after his so-called justification. But some words of scripture,—often detached from all connection either with evangelical truth or with their context,—he conceives are then

spoken immediately to himself by God; and from the *strength* of this impression he is taught to suppose that they *become true* as applied to himself. Thus, for instance,—it is recorded in Scripture that Christ said to one of old—“ Thy sins are forgiven thee—go in peace”—Now if a Methodist, after being led through their preparatory process of what they call *conviction* and *repentance*,—earnestly seeking and striving for what they call *justification*, is on a sudden made to conceive and feel as if a voice from heaven spoke these words *to him*, then he is taught to consider them as *true of him*, and to set himself down without any doubt for *justified*. And then indeed it is but very natural, that he should be very *glad* and very full of *joy*. But I repeat what I said in my Address, that if he has no better or surer ground for his confidence than this, he rests it on a ground most precarious and *unscriptural*.

As to the words that he then conceives spoken to him from heaven, being words of Scripture and to be found in the *Bible*,—I make no more of this, in such an abuse of them, than if they were borrowed from the *Koran*. A man may be ever so strongly persuaded that these, or any similar words, are at some moment divinely spoken to himself, and be as far as a *Mahometan* from believing one truth of Scripture, to the belief of which salvation is annexed. And when I think of the thousands who are led in such a delusive way, in a matter of such infinite moment, I cannot suffer my eyes to be closed to the importance of testifying against the error, and warning them of their danger,—by your telling me that there is no difference between us—but that “ the unlearned Methodist uses a *more material imagery*, while I confine myself to the language of *abstraction*.”

You own that I have “ *taken some pains*” to shew the greatness of the difference between the Methodists and me on this subject:—and I must own that you have been at *no pains* to disprove it.

The method in which you meet my arguments, is a most facile one indeed:—one in which any person, of talents ever so inferior to yours, can equally well refute any arguments—however forcible. What is this method? You quote *four unconnected phrases* from my arguments, about which you say *I "have talked;"* and then add—“but *I conceive* what you say either rests upon a strained sense of some ill-digested expressions, or it is pretty nearly what any *angry adversary* would be no less ready to say of yourself.”—What an *angry adversary* may be ready to say of me, I am not very anxious to enquire. But I hope, Sir, his anger is not to be considered as a refutation of my *cool* reasoning. As to the force of that reasoning turning upon a strained sense of any “ill-digested expressions”—as, you have neither stated those expressions, nor the sense in which they ought candidly to be understood,—I can only refer to my arguments, to prove that the difference between us is by no means about words, but things;—leaving the intelligent reader to appreciate the force of the arguments, and the scriptural believer to estimate the importance of the things.

I shall only add a brief summary of what I have said in my address on these four topics, the *names* of which you enumerate, and say I “*have talked*” about them;—namely, *enthusiasm—spurious faith—spurious peace—a sober garb of seriousness and zeal about self devised religion.* 1st. I have said that it is rank and dangerous *enthusiasm*, to look for a divine revelation of that, which is no where declared in scripture; and to build the persuasion of our sins being pardoned—not upon any thing declared in scripture—but upon the strength of a sudden feeling, with which a supposed intimation of it has been impressed on our minds.—2dly. I have said that all religious *faith* is *spurious*, but that which receives the record of God in his word concerning the Lord Jesus Christ—as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of lost sinners, and as actually

aving unto the uttermost all who *believe* in his name.—3dly. I have said that all religious *peace* is *spurious* which springs from *spurious faith*, or from any thing but the genuine faith of the gospel. 4thly. I have said that all who *disbelieve* the gospel are alike under condemnation, whether their unbelief assume the gross form of sensual indulgence, or the sober garb of *seriousness and zeal about self-devised religion*.—To this effect I have talked on these subjects: and whether it be mere talk,—*vox & præterea nihil*,—a day is coming that will discover.

You have prefaced your observations on this paragraph with saying—that you “will not attempt to ascertain what may be the strictly scriptural sense of the term”—*justification*. It is not in this, Sir, that the great difference lies between the Methodists and me. Here, I believe, we are pretty nearly agreed, that by the *justification* of a sinner we are to understand—the pardon of his sins and his acceptance in the sight of God as a righteous person, against whom “there is no condemnation.”—But the great point in which we disagree, and in which I maintain that their system essentially disagrees with the word of God, lies in the question—*who are justified?* in what way sinners become partakers of this blessing;—and on what grounds any can conclude it to be theirs.—And I suppose it must be this question you intend, when you add—that “few points have occasioned more disputation, and, perhaps with less success;”—for I know not any such unsuccessful disputation about the meaning of the term,—at least between Arminians and those who oppose their system. You yourself, indeed, in the next sentence, seem to mark that it is the *doctrine* of justification—and not the mere sense of the *term*—that you speak of.

Understanding you thus, I must confess that few points have occasioned more *disputation*;—not be-

cause the scriptures are at all doubtful or obscure in their declarations on the subject—(for nothing can be more plainly testified, than the scriptures testify that whosoever *believeth* the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the divine record of his name, is *justified* and accepted in the sight of God, and such alone);—but because the doctrine of scripture on this point has ever been *disputed against* by unbelieving men, and is peculiarly offensive to their pride. I smiled for a time at your calling the *doctrine* of justification—“the *polemic* view of the subject:” and it is an odd expression. But I perceive in what sense it may be admitted, as a very just one. It is that view of the subject, which has ever excited the *hostile attacks* of the unbelieving world.—And that it has been fought against *without success*, I as readily admit. Its adversaries will never *succeed* in overturning it: and such of them, as profess to receive the scriptures, will never *succeed* in getting over the difficulties which they find in the declarations of scripture,—so as to reconcile them with their unscriptural sentiments, or so far as to agree among themselves how the plain truths of the Bible may be best interpreted away. Much learning and ingenuity of *commentators* and *divines* have been long employed for this purpose, and most *unsuccessfully* indeed: while the word of God will continue to “give light and understanding to the simple” believer, however illiterate; and all such will ever continue to find “the wisdom of God and the power of God,” in that “preaching of the Cross”—in those *polemic—disputed* truths of the Bible,—which are “foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews.”

But you appear desirous, Sir, of smothering the whole controversy, by representing that—“clear ideas of the *doctrine*, and *practical* attainment of the benefit, are happily independent of each other:”—or—as you express yourself towards the close of the paragraph—that while “the *polemic* view of

the subject appears of peculiar difficulty—the *practical* view will be sufficiently apprehended by every *humble* and *sincere* Christian.” I could heartily wish you had explained your meaning, and stated what *view* of the subject you consider *practical* in opposition to *doctrinal*. The *practical* view of a sinner’s acceptance before God, separated from the consideration of the question—what sinners are accepted, and how they find acceptance in his sight,—is a matter which I am wholly at a loss to comprehend: though I am sure that the belief of the *doctrine* which the Bible teaches upon this question, never can be separated from the most important *practical* influence.

But indeed, Sir, it would be well if your language here were only obscure and unintelligible. In its dark ambiguity there is unfortunately that, which falls in with a most prevalent and fatal error;—that men have only to be very *good* people—some how or another,—and need not trouble their heads about these questions, that are represented as so difficult, and little more than an unprofitable *strife of words*. So thought one of old; when, appealed to by the unbelieving Jews against the Apostle Paul, he observed—“ if it were a matter “ of wrong or wicked lewdness”—(a breach of *practical* right)—“ reason would that I should bear “ with you:—but if it be a question of words and “ names and of *your law*”—(one of these *disputed*—*polemic*—*doctrinal* questions)—“ look ye to it; “ for I will be no judge of such matters.” (Acts xviii. 15. 16)—So think the great mass of professors of Christianity now: but, by thinking so, only prove that—whatever *humble* and *sincere* they may attribute to themselves—they are not Christians, except in name and form. A Christian is one who *believes the gospel of Christ*, and by the faith of him is justified—has passed from death into life and from darkness into light; one who knows him in the character, in which the scriptures tes-

tify of him,—as the Anointed one of God, alone holding the office and performing the work—of saving to the uttermost every lost sinner that believes in his name. And however you may “believe that clear ideas of the doctrine”—of justification through faith in him—“and practical attainment of the benefit are *happily independent* of each other,”—if you mean by this that any can be justified who *disbelieve* the scriptural doctrine concerning Christ, and the way of justification in him,—you advance an opinion which no Christian can admit. The scriptures of truth protest against all such principles;—and testify that—“he who believeth not shall be damned.”

Happily indeed for us, that truth—the knowledge of which and the benefits of Christ’s salvation are represented in the Bible never as independent of each other, but on the contrary as inseparably connected,—that glorious and joyful truth is there so plainly declared and abundantly confirmed, that there is no *such* difficulty, as you attribute to “the *polemic view of the subject*.” That the *clearness of ideas* upon it is of various degrees in various believers, and in the same believer in various stages of his Christian course, I am well aware. But they are all—from the *least to the greatest*—“taught of God:” and “every man, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto him”—who has been sent of God to be the Saviour of sinners. John vi. 45.

You speak, Sir, of reverencing “the pious feelings” of both the Methodists and their monitor, “without subscribing to the theological system of either.” That is of little consequence, if you subscribe to the theological system of the gospel. But I would seek no surer evidence that a man does not believe the gospel, than his considering the belief of it unimportant, and the doctrines which it proposes to our belief—uncertain, abstruse, and unprofitable speculations.—As to the reverence you

express for *pious feelings*, I cannot but say that you seem throughout your pamphlet, to treat them in a way very inconsistent with the truth. It follows not at all from feelings being *pious*, that they ought to be an object of our reverence. Many a Musselman or Hindoo has very *pious feelings*: But a Christian, observing them, will observe them with concern and with pity; knowing the false object towards which they are exercised, and the false principles by which they are excited. Nor can I view in any other light the most *pious feelings* of those, who—bear the name of Christians—but believe not the revelation which “the only true God” has made of himself in his word. But on this subject I have expressed my sentiments at large in my second letter.

You lament, Sir, that “such charges”—(alluding to the charges of departure from scriptural truth, which I have brought against the Methodist system of doctrine)—that “such charges should be cast by the one on the other, as must afford gratification to the malignant, and can scarcely fail to injure the *common cause* of Christianity, by confirming sceptics in their notion of the uncertainty of revealed truth.”—I am not afraid that sceptics should hear the truths of the gospel vindicated, against all opposers of them. It is not by striving to conceal from sceptics the *anti-christian errors*, which have been introduced into professing Christendom, that they are to be convinced; nor by striving to palm those errors upon them as Christianity; but by exhibiting the real gospel in its simplicity and truth.

The most carnal Jews believed in *a MESSIAH* or *a CHRIST*,—whose coming they expected with all impatience of desire; and they grounded this expectation and belief upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament. But misinterpreting these Scriptures, into a sense altogether different from the true, they pictured to themselves *a CHRIST* suited

to their carnal fancies, and rejected the *true* MESSIAH when he appeared. However, they were thus--in one sense--as much *Christians* as any who now profess to believe in Christ as having come, but represent to themselves as the object of their faith *a CHRIST*--different from him, of whom the Scriptures--both of the Old and New Testament--testify. For the *national faith* which they professed, and by which they were distinguished in their creed from heathen nations, was faith in *a Christ*. Now what would you think, if a person--observing the controversy which the Apostles strenuously maintained against them--should have gravely lamented--“ that *such charges* should be cast by the one on the other as must afford gratification to the malignant, and could scarcely fail to injure the *common cause of Christianity*”—or professional faith in *a Messiah*,—“ by confirming Sceptics in their notion of the uncertainty of revealed truth?” Not a whit more reason have you for the lamentation which you express.

The cause of *real Christianity* is *common* only to those who are *real Christians*, or who *really believe* the *true Gospel* of the grace of GOD. The cause of *professional Christianity* is quite distinct from this; and involves the reputation and secular interests of its numerous professors. But how, Sir, is the former injured, by the world’s being given to understand that all are not Christians in truth, who call themselves so?—that all have not the faith of the *true God*, who profess it? How is it injured by the world’s finding that the truths of the gospel are asserted by the *few*, who believe them, against the *multitude*—of whatever name—who disbelieve them. The *credit* of *professional Christianity* indeed may be supposed to suffer, by the loss of *numbers*; by the world’s discovering that the gospel protests against a great proportion of its professors, as disbelieving it;—just as our Lord protested against the carnal Jews, as not really believing their own Scrip-

tures; and assigns the reason “for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.” (John v. 46.) But I know not how the cause of *real Christianity*, is likely to suffer, by being separated from the pretensions of its false friends.

“Sceptics,” you say, “will be confirmed in their notion of the *uncertainty* of revealed truth.” They must be very ignorant Sceptics, if they needed my Expostulatory Address, to make them acquainted with the notorious fact—that professors of belief in revealed truth are not agreed in their interpretation of it; but that there is, and has been, a great *controversy* between two bodies of them, upon the question—“What think ye of CHRIST?” It is a fact not only of public notoriety, but predicted in the Scriptures themselves: and if any choose to cloak their disregard of the authority of God and his word—(as many will)—under the pretext of declining to examine into that which is *controverted*,—their unbelieving neglect will be upon their own heads; and a *sufficient* number of witnesses will be found to the truth that the scriptures are able to make those who believe them—“*wise unto salvation*;” and that those who either disregard or pervert them are—“willingly ignorant” of what God has revealed—or wilfully disobedient to it. It is for you, Sir, to consider—which of us contributes most to confirm sceptics “in their notion of the *uncertainty* of revealed truth;”—you—in representing the most important doctrines of scripture as doubtful questions, “*of peculiar difficulty*,” which it is at least imprudent publicly to discuss;—or I—in openly maintaining them against opposite errors, and appealing to the scriptures for the ultimate determination of the controversy. Never may I be suffered, under the idea of attaching *respectability* and *weight* to the cause of CHRIST, to attempt identifying my faith with that of *numbers*, who disbelieve the essential principles of Christian truth!

The cause of CHRIST requires not the aid of any such treacherous coalition.

Having thus, in four pages, proposed what you consider as a sufficient *vindication* of the Methodistic system of doctrine, from the numerous objections which I advanced against it,—you now take up the character of an *assailant*; and, through most of your remaining pages, animadvert upon what you think—“very erroneous views of certain scripture doctrines” in my *Expostulatory Address*,—views which seem to you—“to be pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences.” I have already intimated the satisfaction with which I meet you on this ground, and the reasons of it.

You preface this part of your letter with observing that “in the *theological part*”—that is, the *doctrinal* part of my *Address*, my remarks are “seldom more applicable to the Methodists, than to the *generality* of other Christians”—that is, of other professors of Christianity. If you look at the advertisement prefixed to my *Address*, you will perceive that I was well aware of this, when I published it. But what then? If my remarks be founded in truth and scripture, the greater the number they are applicable to, the louder was the call to publish them. Nor while I have the word of God with me, am I at all intimidated by the *numbers* of *men*, which you bring into the field against me. “Ninety-nine out of an hundred, of those whom modern Calvinists deem *evangelical*,” may be “decidedly against me.” But truth, Sir, is never to be determined by a poll; and divine truths are of such importance, and shall assuredly be so effectually asserted by their Almighty Author, that one who knows them will not be afraid to maintain them *singly* against a host of opposers---however numerous and however respectable.

But when you add—that I “seem rather disposed to maintain *a few peculiar tenets of my own*, than to contend for *rational Christianity*”,—I hope

you greatly mistake me. I trust my object is to contend for *real Christianity* against all its adversaries; and I am sure that will be found ultimately the most *rational* thing in the world—even “the wisdom of God: though now reckoned *foolishness* by “the wise of this world.” As to what is meant by *rational Christianity*—namely Christianity cut down and modified to the infidel *imaginings* of men,—I hope I shall ever contend against it. But I know not any opinion I have advanced, which I am disposed to maintain on the ground of its being *my own*. On the contrary, I am conscious that if you, Sir,—or any man—can point out any error of doctrine which I may have unwittingly advanced, it will be doing me the most acceptable service:—a service, which I trust I shall acknowledge with thankfulness and candour: for indeed there are few things that I look at with more dread, than the idea of publishing a false sentiment—in opposition to the *truths* of God. And I pray God to keep me in this spirit, knowing that it is only He who can.

The first “*striking instance*” you adduce of my erroneousness in doctrine, is what I have said respecting *sanctification*. You exclaim at my “assertion, that all true believers in Christ are sanctified *alike* in him, and that no one of them is *more or less holy* than another.”—It would have saved you much trouble, Sir, to have taken notice of the *sense*, in which I expressly advance this assertion; and would have prevented the waste of pains you have employed, to combat it in a sense in which I never maintained it. I stated the radical meaning of the Hebrew word rendered *holy*: and I hope your avowal that you know nothing of the Hebrew language is not to stand as a refutation of my statement, or to throw a doubt upon its accuracy. I shewed the application of it in this meaning, in a variety of instances; where the same radical idea of—*separation unto God*—appears to be uniformly

retained, with no diversity of meaning—but that which is necessarily included in the diversity of the *nature* of the objects thus separated, or in the diversity of the *ways* in which—or the *ends* for which they are *separated unto God*. I shewed how the same radical meaning of the Hebrew word is retained in its correspondent term, in the Greek: and however light you make of that mode of ascertaining the sense of the Greek language in the New Testament, every biblical scholar is sensible of its advantage and importance. I considered the *holiness* of believers as thus primarily intimating their *separation unto God*. I marked the *way* in which they are thus *separated* from the world—namely by their union with Christ, “*the HOLY ONE of God* ;”—in consequence of which the Spirit of God dwells in them. And I marked the *end* or purpose, for which they are thus *sanctified in him*,—namely that God may “ shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards them, by Christ Jesus,” and (I will add—what is indeed included in this)—“ that they may shew forth the praises of him,” to whom they are thus “*a holy nation—a peculiar people.*” I then subjoined—what has so much offended you :—“*and thus*”—(i. e.—*in this sense*) “*are they all alike sanctified in him, from the babe in Christ to the father; a holy nation, a peculiar people to the Lord* :—no “*one of them more or less so than another.*”

Now, Sir, in all this—so far from advancing an opinion in which, as you conceive, “*ninety-nine out of an hundred of those whom modern Calvinists deem Evangelical, are decidedly against me*”—I am bold to say that I advance an opinion, which no man who understands it can contradict. Many a one may and does disbelieve the reality of that *union* between Christ and his members, of which I have spoken;—the reality of any being *in him*—one with him—and so “*not of the world.*” Many also are, with you, ignorant of the literal mean-

ing of the word translated *holy*—in the scriptures of the Old Testament: and *some* may even think with you,—that its signification there throws no light upon the sense, in which the parallel word is used by the writers of the New Testament. In short, they may deny that the sense I have assigned is the sense—or the primary sense—in which believers are called *holy*: but no man, capable of understanding the proposition, can deny that—in *this sense*—all who are *holy* are *alike* *holy*,—none *more or less* so than another. For, in this sense the term becomes the name—not of a *quality*—but of a *genus*: and you know, Sir, that while the former admits *degrees* the latter does not,—but is *utterly incapable of more or less*. Who would assert that *Goliab* was *more a human creature* than *Zaccheus*? Different men may possess in different degrees the *qualities* belonging to their species,—of stature—strength—intellect, &c. One man may be a larger man—a stronger man—a wiser man—than another. But I believe it will be conceded to me that all human beings are—*alike*—men. As incontrovertible is that assertion of mine, that in the sense of—*separated unto God in Christ Jesus*—all believers are *alike* *holy*.

When you therefore call this—“an opinion in which ninety-nine out of a hundred, &c. are decidedly against me,”—I can suppose you to mean only one or other of two things:—either that they will deny that believers are separated in Christ Jesus unto God,—or—that they will deny this to be the primary sense, in which they are called in scripture *holy*. The former—I never heard of any Calvinist who denied:—and as to the latter—I never heard of any Calvinist, moderately acquainted with the original languages of the Bible, who would deny this to be the literal meaning of the words *holy*—or *sanctified*,—and that this is a meaning in which the epithets are applied to believers. But I am well aware, how much they

have overlooked their primary signification, in this application of the words. Be not then displeased or surprised, at my wishing to recal their attention to that, which I think it most important to attend to ;—yes, Sir,—most practically important.

In the Apostolic writings, and throughout the scriptures, we find numerous practical admonitions and exhortations to believers ; but we find them uniformly grounded on the consideration of their *character* and *state as believers* ; on the consideration of what CHRIST is to them, and what they are through rich grace in him. We find them instructed and exhorted to have their conversation—“ as becometh the gospel,” and the great things, which are declared in the gospel to be “ freely given them of God ;”—to walk “ worthy of”—or suitable to—“ the vocation to which they are called ;”—to be “ followers of God, as dear children,—as those who have received the adoption of Sons ;—to live not unto themselves, but unto Him—*as* those who are “ not their own, but bought with a price.” “ THEREFORE”—are they admonished—to “ glorify GOD with their bodies and their spirits, which are GOD’s.” (1 Cor. vi. 20)—In short—the gospel *practice*, as delineated in Scripture, is as much distinguished---in its motives and its grounds—from all the piety and morality of the unbelieving world, as it rises---in its nature and effects—above all their highest attainments. It is, in all respects, a *life of faith* :---*practice* influenced and regulated by the *belief* of those things which the gospel reveals, and of which nature knows nothing. Those who have not this faith, have ever been forward to contend against it as a barren and inoperative *speculation* : and in this they often appear to themselves and others very zealous guardians of practical piety and morality. But those who are partakers of it will ever prove it to be the only—and an effectually powerful spring—of works truly good : and are taught that no works are such—(however specious and

highly esteemed among men)—but those which are the works of faith.

Now an attention to the radical signification in Scripture of the words *holy* and *Saint*,—as denoting that *Separation unto God*, which belongs *alike* as his free gift in Christ Jesus to every believer, and, of which the revealed purpose is the manifestation of his glory in and by them as *his* “peculiar people,” ---an attention to this (I say) stamps with the peculiar *Evangelical* character all the *practical* admonitions and exhortations, which are given believers to holiness of walk and conversation; or, in other words, to such a walk and conversation—to such tempers and conduct—as are correspondent to the *state* of persons thus *separated unto God*, for purposes so full of grace and glory. It suggests to believers the only true motive, and directs them at once into the only true *way*, for maintaining such a walk as becomes their profession; to which while any walk contrary, they can have no scriptural evidence that their profession is not vain.

In those holy *tempers*, and in that holy *conduct*, there are indeed various *degrees*,—according to the degrees of faith and its exercise: and degrees as indefinitely progressive, as the discoveries which “the spirit of wisdom and of revelation” can make, of “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” This I have expressly observed—(though you have not chosen to take notice of it)—in the two paragraphs of my *Addres*, which immediately succeed the sentence that so much shocked you. And if, in this respect and in *this sense*, any choose to speak of believers as not *alike* holy—far be it from me to contradict them. They assert what ... rightly understood—is a certain truth. But I will be as far from giving up that Scriptural and most important sense, in which they *are alike* holy, ---though multitudes ever so great were to be “decidedly against me.”

You say that being ignorant of the Hebrew language, you “can argue only from *common sense* re-

pecting the use of the term"—translated *holy* in the Old Testament. In these cases *common sense* often means nothing more than—those infidel principles of false religion, which are *common* to all men by nature. But I take it for granted, that you intend to include in its import—a regard to all the rules of fair interpretation, which a *common* English reader can employ. And you will observe, Sir, that--- agreeably to this—I suggested the observation of the *different things*, to which the term is applied in Scripture: for I conceive that if there be any meaning of the term, which may be fairly accommodated to the various natures of all these,--- things inanimate—places—times—individual persons ---and a nation,—*common sense* will direct us to adopt that as the interpretation of it, in preference to any other. Such is that meaning of—*set apart* or *separated* to the divine service—which I have assigned to it; and which is more abundantly confirmed by the passages of the Mosaic law, to which I referred the English reader in my Address. It is confirmed also by various others, in which the Jewish people are declared by the Lord to *be*—an *holy* people unto him: which we know they were not nationally in any sense,—except as he had “severed them from other people that they should be *his*.”

Now what is it that you oppose to this? You quote a passage from Leviticus, and conclude from it that the term—“not only signifies *national separation* to the Lord”—but—“*practical* and *personal separation* from sin.” Supposing for a moment the justice of your inference,—let me ask you, Sir, where have I asserted that it signifies only *national separation* to the Lord? Have I not expressly stated that it signifies—in general—*separation to the Lord*, ---whether of a nation, or of any thing else?

This separation was, in the Jewish nation, *ceremonial* in its nature and *typical* in its design: and accordingly was marked out to them by the instituted distinction between things clean and unclean,

concerning which the command was given—"ye shall *therefore*"—(i. e. because I have "separated you from other people")—"put difference between clean beasts and unclean—which I have *separated from you* as unclean: and ye shall be *holy unto me*—not walking in the manners of the nation, which I cast out before you." (Lev. xx 22—26.)—Thus were the Jews, in their ceremonial law, commanded to "*sanctify* themselves," i. e. to walk as a people *separated unto the Lord*; and this in perfect harmony with the other passages which declare them to be a people *sanctified by the Lord*, and *holy* to him. Nor is there any thing more spoken of, in the passage which you adduce from Leviticus, than this ceremonial separation from the use of things ceremonially unclean.

The separation of *believers* to the Lord, as *his* people, is of a *spiritual* nature and for infinitely *higher* purposes. And he has marked out in his word how he will have *them* walk for his own glory, and agreeably to his own will, in a temper of mind and course of conduct—separated from that of the world, out of which they are chosen,—and correspondent with the purposes for which he has chosen them, and with the relation they bear to him—"as the *elect of God, holy, and beloved.*" (Col. iii 12.) And it is *as* a people—thus all alike *holy*—or separated to him—or *sanctified by him*,—that they are called *to be holy*, or to *sanctify* themselves;—in other words, to walk in that way which he has prescribed to *his own* people. As to the various and progressive *degrees* of this their walk,—it is only raising a dust about the question to represent me as denying them. From the whole it appears hitherto—it appears to *common sense*—that neither separation from moral evil, nor from ceremonial uncleannesses, is included in the primary signification of the word rendered *holy*; but (as I said in my Address) "separation "unto God, so as to be brought into a particular "relation to him, appropriated to his use and ser- "vice." According to the *nature* and *purposes* of

that separation, various other things may be *implied* by it: but neither the nature nor purposes of it are included in the radical signification of the term.

Let us now enquire whether *common sense* will enable us to discover—that the same idea is annexed to the parallel Greek word, by the writers of the New Testament. And here, I think, common sense suggests that, when St. Peter for instance—(as in the quotation which you adduce from him)—expressly translates a passage from the Old Testament, ---it is highly improbable that he intended to use the Greek word, in a sense different from that of the Hebrew, which he rendered by it. But do we not obviously find the same idea retained, in the injunction—“give not that which is *holy* unto dogs?” and again, in all the affirmative declarations that believers *are* “an *holy* nation”—“sanctified in Christ Jesus.”—But not to multiply proofs; when our blessed Lord says (John xvii. 19.)—“for their sakes I *sanctify myself*, that they also might be *sanctified* through the truth;”—does not *common sense* tell us that the same word, occurring in the two clauses of this sentence, cannot be used in two different significations? and that as in the former clause, it denotes his *setting himself apart* to the service of the Father ---(which he did, when he “humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant,” for the accomplishment of that work of redemption which was “given him to do”)—so in the latter clause it denotes their being *set apart* to God, as *his* servants and peculiar people? Thus is He the “first-born among many brethren;” and—himself *the HOLY ONE of GOD*—all “whom the Father hath given him,” and who “through the belief of the truth”—are *in him*, and so brought nigh to God, become “a *holy seed*,” to whom HE “is made *sanctification*.” And they—“walking in him”—“led by the spirit” of holiness,—“have their fruit unto holiness,” and their conversation as becometh the *gospel*:”—as be-

cometh those who are "not of the world," but "of God."

Let me add, that, when the term *holy* is attributed to GOD himself, I humbly conceive that it denotes to us the infinite *separation* of his glorious nature from all the imperfections that we see common to creatures;—that "dwelling in light *inaccesible*," which is *appropriate* to God alone:—so that, as that is *holy* among creatures which is separated from their use, so as to be peculiarly *his*,—so by an analogy of signification—(which however I would trace with reverence)—HE is declared to be holy, as the perfections of his being are infinitely removed from the nature of creatures, and belong with an inconceivable exclusion only to himself.

You observe—that "*practical* and *personal* separation from sin" is that, to which "each Israelite was individually obliged." Very true, Sir; though it is a bad inference from the passage from which you deduce it. But I will go farther, and say—that it is that, to which every intelligent creature is obliged in consequence of the relation which he bears as a creature to the Creator:—though it be that which is impossible to belong to any *sinful* creature through any natural power of his own: and therefore—instead of being *more or less* in such, as "*depending on free agency*"—(according to your assertion)—could not belong in any *degree* at all to such, if it were not the gift of God's rich grace and the work of his almighty power in sinners.

Man and all the intelligent creatures of God, as they came from his hands, were created in *holiness*;—they were *his*:—and to walk as *his*—"*holy unto the LORD*"—in the universal consecration of all their powers to *his* glory, and the universal regulation of them by *his* will, *whose they were*,—while it was their indispensable duty—was that to which their uncorrupted nature constantly led. But as soon as *sin*—or opposition to the will of God—entered into that nature—either of angels or of men, as apostatizing.

rom God and *separated from Him*, they became *un-holy* in their state, and *un-holy* in their nature. At the same time—(whatever the proud sophistry of man may argue to the contrary)—the obligation of his holy law continued unchangeably the same, undissolved by their utter incapacity to fulfil a tittle of its requirements. That incapacity constitutes part of the *ruin* in which sin involves the transgressing creature: and arises from the utter impossibility that a creature *separated from God*—should reinstate himself in the rank of those whom he owns and claims as *his*;—as well as from the contrariety of his fallen nature to the divine will.

But—“what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the *flesh*, God—sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for *sin*”—accomplishes. That restoration to the state of those who are *his—holy unto the Lord*,—which is the necessary *foundation* of all correspondently *holy walking* with him,—nothing but the arrogance of blinded pride can suppose that an apostate creature is able—by his *free agency*—to obtain: or that he can do any thing to acquire it. Nothing but ignorance of the true God can lead any to imagine, that such a creature—if ever restored to it—can be restored in any way, but by that God from whom he is fallen,—by an act of his free and sovereign mercy; or that it could ever be compatible with his righteousness and truth— with the essential glories of his character—to extend this mercy, but in the way which his gospel reveals, and which it could never have entered into the heart of a creature to conceive, if it had not been revealed. It is revealed; and is indeed “the *wisdom* of God and the *power* of God to them that *believe.*”

Sin, that separated between God and us must be taken away;—righteousness must be brought in;—the divine law must be “magnified and made honourable,” while transgressors of it are taken back to God;—God must be “just and the justifier of

the ungodly ;" — in order that *unholy* creatures may become *holy* to the Lord — his peculiar people. All these impossibilities to usen, the Lord Jesus Christ — IMMANUEL — GOD manifest in the flesh — has accomplished by his obedience unto death. HE is " the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." — HE is the voluntary servant of JEHOVAH, who has " finished the work which the Father hath given him to do" on earth. And now all, who believe the record of his gospel, are *in him* — and " in him complete ;" — brought back to God with full acceptance of their persons, and that consequent holiness of their state — as a people *separated unto God* — which, in the very nature of it, can no more be partial or admit of degrees — than the recovery of this state could depend on their *free agency* ; — or that — (what typified this) — the separation of the Jewish people from all the other nations of the earth depended upon theirs.

As those who are thus a " holy nation," through the unspeakable gift of God, — as those to whom CHRIST is thus " made of God sanctification," and who are " THUS" — (I repeat it) — or in this sense — this scriptural and most important sense — " all alike " *sanctified in him* — no one of them more or less so " than another," — they are called to walk ; — to walk in that separation of spirit and of conduct which is marked out for them by the will of *their* God ; — or, in that sense, to sanctify themselves. And they alone — (whether believers of the gospel — preached by types and prophecies — before the coming of the Messiah ; or believers of the same Gospel preached — since his coming — by his apostles) — they alone have done so ; and they alone will or can do so : for they alone are restored to that holiness of state which admits no degrees, — and to that spirit of holiness, which in his operations undoubtedly does.

Now observe, Sir, I stated — in that offensive passage of my Address — the proper meaning of the adjective *holy*, and shewed that it signified that generic

state, which is incapable of *more or less*. You oppose to this statement—what? The meaning of the verb to *sanctify*; which—besides the signification of *making holy*, or bringing into such a state,---is often employed to denote the treating or acknowledging of a thing as holy—the walking as holy---or the evidencing to be holy—(just like the correspondent varieties of application in the verb to *justify*) :—and from the *degrees* of which these latter *operations* are necessarily capable, and which I never thought of denying, you argue—as if you argued against me. Well indeed might you say—that “to go on with quotations on this point, would be to transcribe great part of the New Testament.” To quotations—*equally pertinent*—there would be no end. You might as well argue against my position, that—all men are *alike MEN*, no one of them *more or less* so than another;—and gravely produce that form of expression—*be ye men*—(*i. e.* conduct yourselves like men)—as if the various degrees, in which this exhortation may be complied with, were inconsistent with the accurate truth of my assertion, or designed to be denied by it. And allow me to say—that it would not be more preposterous to address that exhortation—*be ye Men*—to creatures who, from not possessing the human *nature*, were not *already men*—in that sense in which all men are *alike* so,—than it is preposterous to consider the scriptural exhortation—*be ye holy*—as addressed to any who are not, or profess not to be, *already holy*—in that sense in which no one is *more or less* so than another. We must *be holy*, before we can *walk holily*. And none of the descendants of fallen Adam *are holy*, but those who are in the Lord Jesus Christ;—as every *believer* of the Gospel is. You conceive that the various degrees, which their *holy walking* certainly admits, arise from its “*dependance on their free agency*.”—If you mean by this, that it *depends upon themselves*,—you advance an assertion which every *believer* rejoices to

know is false. It is well for believers, that the holiness of their walk depends continually—on their being led by a spirit not their own; even the same spirit of truth, which first gave them to know Him---who is “*the way, and the truth, and the life*”

By this time, Sir, I suppose you are sensible that when you quote St. Peter’s expression—“*be ye holy in all manner of conversation*”—to prove degrees in the believer’s holiness of walk,—you are labouring to prove what I myself asserted in my Address,—and what is not at all contradictory to the position, with which you attempt to set it at variance. The apostolic exhortation amounts simply to this;—*in all the various turns of human life*,—(I borrow your own words)—*walk as those who are the people of God—a people holy, or separated to the Lord*.—In like manner, the expression you quote from the Apostle Paul—“*the very God of peace sanctify you wholly*”—is as if he said, —*may He, whose you are, lead you walking in the consecration of all your powers to his service---as those who are wholly his!*

But I cannot help lamenting an equal infelicity in the way, in which you deduce from both these passages—your indisputed inference—that such a walk is certainly capable of degrees. On the former passage you say—“does not such a direction “imply, that there was a possibility of individuals “not being holy in *all* their conversation; just as “there was a possibility of individual Israelites defiling themselves with creeping things?”—You, Sir, are such an advocate for what is *practical*, that I am sure you will excuse me for suggesting what seems a necessary guard on your expressions. Just as the Israelite, who defiled himself with *one* thing pronounced ceremonially unclean, was as really defiled as if he had defiled himself with twenty;—just so, the professor of the Gospel, who walks contrary to holiness in any *part* of his conversation, is *unbo-*

ly in his walk; and while he indulges himself in this—affords no evidence of being among the *saints of God*. The will of God is not regarded at all,---so far as there is not a regard to the *whole* of it, that is made known to us:—and there is no holiness of walk, so far as there is not in our walk a regard to his will—as that God to whom we belong. When you therefore *seem* to infer, from an exhortation to his people to consecrate themselves *wholly* to him, that they may consecrate themselves to him *partially*;—you *seem* to draw an inference, that is not only logically inaccurate but practically dangerous.

The same observation may be needful, on your remark upon St. Paul's prayer—above quoted. You say—“ when he prays that they may be sanctified *wholly*, does he not clearly imply that it was a possible thing for them to be sanctified in *part?*” Nay, Sir; a prayer that believers may have a certain blessing, by no means implies that they may have one *half* of that blessing—without the other half: and the professor who seeks but *half* the blessing, has reason to fear that he is destitute of it *altogether*. By these observations I would not convey the slightest intimation, that you meant to sanction the pernicious error in practice against which I protest:—but I think they are observations which the dangerous turn of your expressions called for.

And now, Sir, I am aware that—to a great many even of “ those whom modern Calvinists deem *Evangelical*,”—perhaps to “ ninety-nine out of an hundred” of them,—in a great part of what I have written, I shall seem to have been maintaining a *verbal contest*. And that it is in some respects verbal,—I readily acknowledge. But give me leave to say, that those who know most of Scriptural truth ---are most sensible of its importance; and that those who know most of its importance—are most sensible how important it is to ascertain the meaning of the *words*, in which it is conveyed. The **BIBLE**,

Sir, is composed of *words*; and the man who is ready to decry—as *verbal*—a contest about the sense in which these words are to be understood, is ready to lay aside his Bible—as unimportant:—while the man who conceives that the *doctrines*, which the Bible teaches, are not practically important,—certainly does not believe these doctrines.

Contrary to my intention and expectation, I am obliged to close this letter without finishing my answer to your remarks. I am obliged—for the sake of giving rest both to myself and to my readers,—and for other reasons which it is needless to specify.

I shall conclude with a brief statement of some—among the many—important inferences, which flow from the scriptural meaning of the term—*holy*. It distinctly marks who—and who alone *are holy*,—namely those who *believe* the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It cuts down all the vain imaginations, which the unbelieving world entertain, that they differ from those who believe—not in the essential characters of their *state*—but, at most, in the *degrees* of a fancied *goodness*.—It shews that those who disbelieve the Gospel are—not *less holy* than those who believe it—but altogether *unholy*.—It detects the factitious sanctimoniousness of temper and of conduct, which the *religious* part of the unbelieving world exert themselves to attain;—and proves it in its highest forms, to be but a specious *imitation* of holiness, and a vain attempt “to bring a clean thing out of an unclean.”—It gives to God “the glory due unto his name;”—evincing the holiness of all believers—both the perfect holiness of their *state*, and the progressive holiness of their *walk*.—to be—not of their *works*, but of his rich *grace* or unmerited favour. It gives a precise and Evangelical direction, to all their pursuit after holiness of life and conversation; putting them—not upon making themselves what they *are not*, but upon walking correspondently to the state in which they *are*.—It cheers them—even the youngest—the

weakest believer—in this pursuit, with that “joy of the Lord, which is their strength.” It animates them under every discouragement in the pursuit; and stimulates them to the highest aim,—to the most universal—the most continual—the most willing consecration of themselves to that God, *whose they are*,—to the most humble walking with him,---and to the most unreserved regulation of themselves by his revealed will.

Thinking as you do, Sir, that this is—“among the very erroneous views of Scripture doctrines,”--- which I have given,—I heartily hope that your charity will lead you to state—the “peculiarly pernicious consequences,” with which it seems to you “to be pregnant.” I have no apprehension that you will succeed in overturning it:—but convinced, as I am, that it is true, and pregnant with consequences the most important and most salutary,—I shall rejoice in every opportunity of giving it a public discussion.

I remain, Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
Aug. 19. 1803.

LETTER V.

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SIR,

YOU employ the ten following pages of your remarks, in opposing my sentiments upon REPENTANCE. That is the next instance, in which I seem to you to have given "very erroneous views of certain scripture-doctrines, and pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences." I confess that I enter upon this part of your letter with a solemn satisfaction, in the view of the opportunity which it affords me, of publicly maintaining the important truths which you oppose. They seem to have excited in your mind a warmth of offence, which has led you to a more explicit statement of your own doctrinal views, than is to be found in other parts of your Pamphlet. I have only to entreat a candid interpretation of the plainness with which I must refute your errors,—(I use not this language without hav-

ing coolly weighed what I say)—and that it may not be imputed to any failure of personal respect towards my antagonist, or to the pality desire of a personal victory ; but to that which I trust, is my only allowed motive—a sense of the important nature of the truths at issue between us.

You quote from my Address the passage which you oppose so warmly, and in which I have advanced these three positions :—1st, that “ *REPENTANCE unto life* is not any thing preceding *faith* or unconnected with it ; but is that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to *believe* with the heart on the Son of God.”—2dly, that “ any thing called *repentance*, while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*, is but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift :”—and 3dly, that “ I would no more be warranted in representing any such *infidel repentance* as a *preliminary step to faith*, than in so representing *Murder* and *Adultery*. Before I proceed to repel your attack, allow me to make a few observations upon each of these three assertions distinctly : against the whole of which your subsequent remarks are indiscriminately pointed.

Now upon the first of these so offensive positions, let me remind you, that my expression—*Repentance unto life*—is borrowed from Scripture (Acts xi. 18.) ; and let us examine the passage where it occurs there, to see whether it be there used for any thing preceding *faith* or unconnected with it. The Apostle Peter is vindicating himself to his brethren at Jerusalem, for having “ gone into men uncircumcised and for eating with them.” He rehearses to them from the beginning, how he had received a divine commission to go to Cornelius and his company ; how he had declared to them the Gospel ; and how, while he was speaking the Holy Ghost fell on them in that open and miraculous effusion, which was then common in the Church. He adds,—“ for as much then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who *believed* on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I

that I could withstand God?" It then follows---"when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying—Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted *repentance unto life*,"—or that change of mind which is accompanied with all the blessings of salvation—included in the scriptural import of the word *life*—or *eternal life*. Now, Sir, let me seriously ask you, is there any thing in this passage that countenances your opposition to my assertion? In this instance, at least, it appears that the disciples who used the expression—*repentance unto life*—did not mean by it "any thing preceding *faith* or unconnected with it:—for it is under the preaching of the *Gospel*, and in the *believing* of it, that this *repentance* is expressly considered as granted to the Gentiles.

But waving this instance,—if you admit that there is any such thing as *repentance unto life*, or a change of mind connected with Salvation, you cannot persist in opposing my assertion about it without contradicting the whole tenor of scripture. For, as Peter declared on that occasion to Cornelius and his company, all the scriptures bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ, "that through *his* name, *whoever BELIEVETH* in him shall receive remission of sins;"---or, as John the Baptist expressed it, that "he that *believeth* on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that *believeth* not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;"—or, as our Lord himself, that "he that *believeth* on him, is not condemned; "but he that *believeth* not, is condemned already, "because he hath not *believed* in the name of the only begotten Son of God" Now, Sir, if *repentance unto life* be any thing preceding *faith* and unconnected with it, then those who have this *repentance* (I must repeat an expression that offended you) ---this *infidel repentance*, though they do not yet *believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ, have *life*, and are in a state of salvation;—then "Faith is made void and the promise made of none effect;"—then the concurrent

testimony, which all the Prophets and all the Apostles bear to the Lord Jesus Christ,—as “the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sin of the World,”—is overturned; and a repentance, unconnected with the faith of him, is substituted in his place. Did I say—*unconnected* with the faith of him? Nay in direct *opposition* to it: for on such a supposition, there would be no room left for *believing* the scriptural testimony concerning him at all.

But it is not thus more certain—that those, who believe not, have not *repentance unto life*, than it is certain—that, whosoever indeed *believes* the Gospel, is a partaker of this repentance—or *new mind*. It is throughout the Scripture represented as an inward change, which has taken place in *all* our Lord’s people—all who are in a state of salvation. It is one of the gifts which, along with *remission of sins*, HE is exalted to bestow. (Acts v. 31.) All who *believe* in him have remission of sins, and are justified from all things:—I argue therefore that all, who *believe*, have repentance. And I leave it to your cooler judgment to consider, how far these observations confirm the justice of my first position—that *repentance unto life* is “that *new mind* of which we are made partakers, when we are given to *believe* with the heart on the Son of God.”

From this, by necessary inference, the truth of my second assertion follows. If *repentance unto life* be thus inseparably connected with faith, any repentance that takes place—while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*—is not *repentance unto life*;—or, as I expressed it, is “but a spurious imitation of that heavenly gift,—is but a refined form of the fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its works is evil—only evil continually.” It would be a waste of labour to argue in confirmation of so plain a consequence. Unbelieving professors will fret under it, and exclaim at it:—and the more they have laboured at obtaining such *infidel repentance*, and the more they seem to have succeeded in

working themselves into a sober and very religious form of the fleshly mind, the more indignant they will probably be at the warning voice, which testifies that they remain as before—"dead in trespasses and sins;"—that, as unbelievers, "the wrath of God abideth on them;"—that they are yet carnal—and that "they who are in the flesh *cannot* please God."—But the truths of God must not be concealed through fear of the offence which they will excite. We must declare them, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

As to my third assertion—that any such *infidel* *repentance* is no more "a preliminary step to faith, than Murder or Adultery,"—I consider it so important, that I am solicitous to clear it, as much as possible; from all ambiguity:—not that I think you have in the main mistaken the meaning of it, but because I conjecture that you will not be the *last* who will attack it.—Now it is obvious that my meaning is not—that such spurious repentance never takes place *previous* to saving repentance and faith: for I have expressly observed that there may be many such "changes in the sinner's mind," before he believes the gospel. Neither do I mean to deny—that the Lord's hand may be in such changes,—permitting and ordering them: for we have reason to know that his hand is over those who are never brought to the knowledge of the truth: and that even upon them his spirit variously works, according to the purposes of his own will. And it is certain that his hand is from the beginning *graciously*, as well as *wisely* and *powerfully*, over those whom he has "ordained to eternal life," controlling and leading them—even while they know him not,—and ordering all their circumstances in subserviency to the designs of his grace and mercy, which are afterwards manifested to them. But the meaning of my assertion is simply this---that no such *infidel* *repentance* brings a man a whit nearer to the state and character of a *believer*, than the

most open profligate ;—that the latter is not more “dead in sins and alienated from the life of God” than the former—than Mr Fletcher’s *carnal penitent* ;—that the same Gospel of the grace of God is addressed to both, as precisely upon a level---proclaiming Salvation to the murderer and adulterer, who shall *believe* the faithful record, as freely and as immediately as to the *carnal penitent* ; and not requiring any such change of infidel repentance to take place in the former—in order to *authorize* him to believe the glad tidings—or in order to *qualify* him for a participation of all the blessings that are connected with believing it.

Such, Sir, is the plain import of my assertion ; and perhaps the more plainly it is stated, the more it will shock your feelings. Yet—perhaps also—it may, through the blessing of God, be made the occasion of giving you such a view of the nature and glory of the gospel, as you have not yet had. The assertion thus stated, does indeed stand pointed---not only against the whole of the Methodistic system of theology,—but against a great mass of falsehood, that is current among many who call themselves Calvinists, and pride themselves in the name of *Evangelical*. But do not they who oppose this assertion, betray their ignorance of the first principles of the gospel of Christ ; and shew that their unbelieving hearts yet stumble at the *offence of his cross* ? Is not his Gospel—*good news to sinners*, to *lost sinners*, to the *chief of sinners* ?—glad tidings of a Saviour for such, a Saviour of his people from their sins ? a Saviour, *in whom* “the gift of God is eternal life—to *every one* that believeth” the Gospel which testifies his name ?—A Saviour, given for the express purpose—“that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life ?” And was it not his own express command, that *this* Gospel should be preached to all the nations---even those most sunk in heathenish darkness, and in diabolical corruptions ?

Glorious were its effects in such :—It was indeed the *rod of his power*. And awful have been the effects, in the *Religious world*, of these departures from the truth, which men have introduced---too wise to become fools for Christ—and too proud to submit themselves to the righteousness of God. To such the foundation laid in Zion has been a *stumbling block* of old. They were long ago *offended* at Him, who avowed himself the friend and saviour of publicans and sinners ;—at him who addressed those, who were most wise and righteous in their own esteem, as on a level with the vilest—as blind, and servants of Satan, and haters of God. Such at that day openly rejected him : but since, through the establishment of national Christianity, it has become not creditable to be *avowed infidels*,—they now take the Gospel, and variously *accommodate* it to their unbelieving fancies ; and frame to themselves a Saviour—whom they call Christ, and for whom they often shew much *zeal*,—who shall acknowledge the *distinctions* between sinner and sinner, which they set up in the pride of their hearts ; ---who shall be a nominal Saviour to those who are *so good* themselves—that they have little occasion for any,—to well disposed and qualified sinners,---to those who make themselves meet, by *preliminary repentance*, to get the blessings that he bestows.

The systems of such are various : they are often greatly puzzled by the plain declarations of scripture ; and they have come to very little agreement among themselves about the best way of getting over these declarations. Some of the bolder ones are for leaving them out of the bible, as *mistakes* of the sacred penmen, or as *interpolations* of the text. Others, who scruple this, find—in *Eastern Metaphors* ---a ready way of making them mean any thing or nothing : and then the distinction—between Christianity in the *Apostles' days* and Christianity now ---brings them over many difficulties :—and learning, and ingenuity and sophistry are called in aid to

cover up others: and the clamour—the stupid but vehement clamour—that “great is Diana of the Ephesians!”—is raised to cry down the truths, which they are unable to refute. But however little agreement there is among those men in other points, they all *agree* in the indignation they express against the few who declare the true gospel, which owns no distinction of character or state between man and man, ---but that of those who *believe* it and those who *believe* it not;—which addresses all men as lost sinners;—and levels to the dust all the fancied superiority of some above others—in declaring that “*WHO-
SOEVER believeth shall be saved.*”

But I now turn to the remarks which you make, on the obnoxious passage you have quo'ed from my Address. You observe—that you must “conceive it clearly to mean, that men are to *do* nothing in order to their obtaining God's grace and mercy.”---Let us pause there.—Sir, you conceive very right. I do mean that the Gospel reveals the divine grace and mercy—not “to him that *worketh*” or *do-eth* any thing in order to obtain it—but “to him that *believeth* on Him who justifieth the *ungodly*.” I do mean to assert that this is the essential character of the Gospel. It proclaims that “when we were *without strength* in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*;” and that “in him *all* who *believe* are justified”—“have righteousness and strength;”—“not by works of righteousness that they have done, but of his mercy who has saved them.” And I do mean to assert farther—that, if it were otherwise, it would not be *grace*, or mere *mercy* in the scriptural sense of the word. For the Scriptures tell us that ---“to him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of *Grace* but of *debt*:” and again—“if it be by *Grace*, then is it no more of *works*—otherwise *Grace* is no more *Grace*;—but if it be of *works*, then is it no more *Grace*—otherwise *work* is no more *work*.”—But when I say that I do mean to assert all this, let me remind you that the assertion rests upon-

an authority infinitely higher than mine. It has been, and ever will be, offensive to those who think that they are not altogether *without strength*, nor altogether *ungodly*. They would rather be put upon trying their supposed remnant of strength, by having some little task assigned them, that they should *do* in order to obtain the favour of God: and then they would be content to compliment the Almighty, with calling it *Grace* and *Mercy*. Yet that Gospel which they reject is the only real *glad tidings* to sinners: and “blessed is the people who know the joyful sound.”

Those who contradict the assertion—that men are to *do* nothing in order to their obtaining God’s grace and mercy—must suppose that they have found a different way of obtaining it from any which the Apostles knew of.—When one of these was addressed of old by an alarmed sinner, scared by the terrors of the Lord, with that question—“What must I *do* to be saved?” did he tell him in reply---*do this or that preparatory work in order to obtain or be qualified for the mercy of God?* Nay—the Apostles were better taught, and were better teachers.—The answer is explicit—“**BELIEVE** on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

But I would be glad to be informed explicitly---what kind of work this is, that Sinners are to *do* in order to their obtaining God’s grace and mercy. It must of necessity be something *done* by them independently of that grace and mercy, of which they are yet supposed to be destitute: and I suppose it must be something of a *religious* nature. Now what say the scriptures concerning the Religious works of unrighteous men? *The sacrifice of the wicked*---that sacrifice, by offering which they intimate an expectation of its being accepted---*is*—what? something that contributes to their obtaining God’s grace and mercy?—no such thing:—*is*—*an abomination to the Lord*.—What else indeed can it be? Their persons unrighteous in his sight, how can any of their

works be accepted? Their hearts enmity against him and " alienated from the life of God—through the ignorance that is in them,"—how can their offerings be imposed on the Searcher of hearts, as any thing good?—And if there were no other text in the bible to prove, that by the *wicked* we are not to understand merely the *irreligious profligates* of the world, that text which I have just now quoted, would be sufficient to prove it: for the wicked is there presented to our view in a *religious exercise*—offering his *sacrifice*.—And if his religious acts—so far from contributing " to obtain God's grace and mercy"---are *an abomination to the LORD*, I am at a loss to know what else he is to *do* in order to obtain it. The word of God testifies against all he *does* as sin; and protests against the proud hopes that he cherishes from his *doings* as vain and deceitful:—but, in the glorious Gospel, *brings near a righteousness and salvation* suited to such a wicked sinner; and suited to him—as in every thing else—so in its assurance that *whoever BELIEVETH shall be saved*. And I am bold to assert that, the more every system different from this is examined, the more absurdly inconsistent it will be found with the dictates of right reason; as well as the more impiously derogatory to the perfections of JEHOVAH.

You go on, Sir, in your statement of what you conceive to be my meaning; and you observe that you must conceive me to mean—that if men be of " the number of Christ's redeemed people, it will " be given them, without any effort on their part, to " believe on Christ with such a faith as will imply " the *spirit of adoption and a new heart!*" The mark of *admiration*, which you annex to this, is designed, I suppose, to intimate your astonishment that I should hold an opinion, which appears to you so incredible and preposterous. But strange as it appears to you, I shrink not from accepting your statement of my opinion. And I must observe to you that your *ioe* of incredulous admiration would be

just as much in place, if affixed to those declarations of our Lord :—" all that the father giveth me shall come to me :"—" no man can come to me except the father which hath sent me draw him—except it be given unto him of my father :"—" the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."—" a new heart will I give you :"—" I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people ; and they all *shall know me* from the least to the greatest : for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." No words can more expressly assert the truth—so offensive to the pride of man,—but so glorious to God, and so joyful in reality for sinners—that the whole of this work of faith—whereby they are brought to the saving knowledge of the true God—are turned to him, and are partakers of a new mind and a new spirit,—is the exclusive work of Him, who hath said—" *I will work ; and who shall let it ?*"—and his work—in those who are represented as no less incapable of doing any thing to obtain those blessings, than the dead are incapable of contributing to their own resurrection.

Men, naturally, in the blindness and pride of their hearts, will not credit these declarations of God concerning his name, his purposes, and his work ; and you will always find unbelieving professors endeavouring to lower the greatness and the freedom of the gift of God. They think that they can do without receiving quite *so much* ; or without *receiving* it in the way of a free gift—" not of works but of grace" —or of mere mercy ;—that they can get it, without having it bestowed on them, as on those who themselves deserve nothing, but that eternal death, which is " the wages of sin,"—and who can *do* nothing to avert the righteous sentence pronounced against sin, or to qualify themselves for being made partakers

of the blessings of salvation. They will be content to talk of themselves and their powers very *humbly* (as they think)—if you only allow that they can do *something*, ever so little, upon which the difference in their favour is to turn, and not upon the sovereign grace of God. And they will be content to talk very *honourably* (as they think) of his grace, and of receiving a very great deal from it, if you only allow that they are not to receive all—the whole of salvation from first to last; or that they are not to receive it as his free gift, which might justly be withheld.—But let them dispute against it ever so much, “this is the record—that God hath *given* to us”—to us who *believe* on the Son of God) ---“*eternal life*; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.”

You intimate your astonishment at my supposing that sinners are given to believe on Christ—“without any *effort* on their part:” and while I do not wonder at your holding such language, as I know how common it is in the professing world—even in that part of it which is falsely called Evangelical,—and by what great names the language has long been sanctioned;—pardon me, Sir, for plainly telling you that it is language as pregnant with absurdity, as it is opposite to the whole tenor of Scripture. Let its advocates come forward, and if they can, in unambiguous language describe the *effort* of an *unbelieving* sinner to *believe* the Gospel; the *effort* of a man to *believe* the truth which he *disbelieves*—and not only disbelieves but *bates*, and is making every *effort* to overturn! Pardon me for borrowing your note of admiration, to distinguish one of the many glaring absurdities, involved in the denial of that opinion—to which you annex it.

You proceed to slate that you must conceive me to mean—that “until this work is divinely wrought “by the Spirit of God, all endeavours are fruitless, “all repentance but mere workings of the evil na-

“ ture ;—and the most poignant sorrow for sin, and
 “ the most lively solicitude about eternal things no
 “ more a preliminary step to *faith in Christ* than
 “ Murder or Adultery.” Indeed, Sir, I have said
 so : and I am glad to find that upon this subject at
 least I have spoken so plainly in my Address, that
 you have not failed to understand my meaning. In
 the *religious world*, to be sure my meaning—as far
 as it is attended to—must excite great indignation.
 ... ‘ What ! all our endeavours fruitless—because we
 ‘ believe not these strange doctrines called the *Gospel*.
 ‘ What ! all our efforts to repent and, reform our-
 ‘ selves and qualify ourselves for being objects of the
 ‘ divine grace and mercy—worth nothing or less than
 ‘ nothing. What ! we who have been so long stri-
 ‘ ving to make ourselves so good—shall we be repre-
 ‘ sented as on a level with the murderer and adul-
 ‘ terer ; and not brought one step nearer to God than
 ‘ the vilest profligates ? What ! are we to be told that
 ‘ the wretch, who has been to the present moment
 ‘ the vilest profligate, if he now *but believes* the *Gos-
 ‘ pel*, is justified and shall be saved eternally ?—and
 ‘ that we so religious and so well disposed, shall be
 ‘ damned unless we believe it, and—believing it—
 ‘ repent with a repentance of which we are yet def-
 ‘ titute ? Away with such *licentious* doctrine, and
 ‘ with such *pestilent fellows* as preach it ! *It is not*
 ‘ fit for any rational and virtuous hearers ; and *they*
 ‘ are not fit for any respectable society.’ Such is the
 language of the *Pharisaic* heart, stumbling at the
 cross of Christ. Such is that offence of the cross,
 which many Evangelical professors are very solici-
 tious to conceal or disguise, lest their good name and
 popularity in the religious world should suffer ; but
 which those who know the grace of God in truth,
 will desire to bring forward into view,—lamenting
 indeed that so many are offended at it, but well know-
 ing that “ the preaching of the cross—while it is to
 them that perish foolishness, is unto those who are
 saved the *power of God*,”

Were I as ambitious as many of supporting my opinions by the aid of human authority, I might call your attention, Sir, to the sound words contained in the 13th Article of the Church of England; in which it is declared of *works before justification*,—*that forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, they do not make men meet to receive grace; but rather have the nature of sin* :—and I might express my surprise at any member of that church decrying this as a novel and strange doctrine. But it is rather to be wondered at that men should do this, who have the Bible in their hands, and profess to receive it as the word of God. Have they never read in Scripture the contrast between “the righteousness which is of the law,” and “the righteousness which is of faith?” (Rom. x. 4.—9.) that while the language of the former is—“the man which *doeth* these things shall live by them,”—the latter speaketh on this wise—“the word is *nigh* thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart! that if thou shalt *confess* with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe* in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”—Have they never read how—“the Gentiles which *followed not* after righteousness”—took no *preliminary steps* towards it—“attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of *faith* ;” while “Israel which *followed after* the law of righteousness”—busied in doing this and that *in order to obtain God's grace and mercy*—“had not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore?”—Let the Apostle answer his own question—“Because they sought it not by *faith*, but as it were by the *works of the law*; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone: as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence:—and who soever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Rom. ix. 30—33.

Nor tell me, Sir, that the *works* which you would have sinners *do now* as *preliminary steps* to Justification, are of a different kind from those about which the unbelieving Jews busied themselves. The Apo-

He marks their fatal error, as consisting—not in any mistake about the *kind* of works to be done for justification,—but in their radical ignorance of “God’s righteousness,” and of the only way in which a sinner can be justified in his sight;—not by *doing* anything, but by *believing* in Christ, who is the end of the Law for Righteousness to *every one* that believeth.” The distinguishing glory of the Gospel is, that it reveals *his* Work, finished in his obedience unto death, in which every thing that was necessary to be *done* for the justification and acceptance of the *chief* of *Sinners* has been completed by himself alone: and that it brings *near* this righteousness to the most ungodly, in the divine declaration, that “**WHOSOEVER believeth in HIM** is justified from all things, has peace with God, and is accepted in the beloved.” Those who represent something still to be *done* by the sinner—(under the name of repentance, or whatever other name)—as a *preliminary step to faith in Christ*, contradict the essential principle of the Gospel;—represent righteousness as still at a distance from sinners (perhaps only a *few steps* off)—put them upon *getting near* to it, and so *following* after that which they never will in this way attain. Those who act upon such principles prove in this, that they *disbelieve* the Gospel; and that their works are works of *unbelief*. You may tell them that they are *preliminary steps* to believing: but I must still testify that they are no more so than *Murder* or *Adultery*. “**Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the CHRIST is born of God**,”—“begotten with the *word of truth*,” (1 John v. 1. James i. 18): and till then the sinner is “alienated from the *life of God*—*dead* in trespasses and in *sins*;” and all his works are “*dead works*,”—no one of them more than another a *preliminary step* to faith. And especially those works which constitute his *Religion*—which he “does in order to his obtaining God’s grace and mercy”—they above all others are grounded upon a denial of the Gospel, and stand pointed in direct opposition to the *faith of Christ*.

You think it very hard that nothing should be allowed to "the most poignant sorrow for sin, and the most lively solicitude about eternal things," as preliminary steps to faith. But what kind of *sorrow for sin* is that, which precedes the faith of the Gospel? Not certainly a godly sorrow; not a sorrow springing from any *love* to God or to his Law: ---for the unbelieving sinner hates the true God, and manifests the hostility of his mind especially in his rejection of that Gospel—in which the glory of the divine character is most conspicuously displayed. His sorrow is at most but the carnal grief, arising from apprehension of a God against whom lie is at enmity; and be not shocked, Sir, when I say that it is in hell that sorrow will be most poignant,---though I do not conceive that it will bring the condemned subject of it one *step* nearer to heaven. And as to the most lively solicitude about eternal things---it is, in the unbelieving sinner, but an awful foreboding of that judgment to come, of which he still hates the thought; and for which all his most strenuous efforts to *prepare* himself are but—so many strenuous efforts to subvert the principles of righteousness and truth on which it shall proceed. How far such workings of his evil nature are calculated "to obtain God's grace and mercy,"—how far they "are things to be *done* in order to his obtaining it," ---I recommend to the consideration of the advocates for *preliminary steps to faith in Christ*. I well know that they are very numerous: for half the books that I have seen—even under evangelical titles---and written by men of great name in the Religious world for evangelical principles,—seem to be stuffed with directions to sinners who are considered as mid-way to Christ,—mid-way between a state of nature and a state of grace. But while I take the word of God and not the writings of men for my rule, I can acknowledge no such characters: ---and can consider the fairest directions given to sinners, as in such a state, calculated only to lead

them fatally astray,—directions for walking ~~very~~ religiously to Hell. It was an old lamentation of the Prophet—“ the leaders of this people cause them to err ; and they that are led of them are destroyed :” and it is one, for which there has been continued occasion to the present day.

After having stated what you conceive me to mean in that obnoxious passage, which you quote from my address—(and it appears that you conceive my meaning aright),—you add ;—“ *to reason* against such positions would I apprehend be a very hopeless attempt.” Indeed, Sir, it would : for it would be an attempt to overturn the everlasting Gospel,---to annul that Word of God which *abideth for ever*. “ The simpler and surer method,” however, of combating my positions, which you say you will have recourse to, would be the most conclusive mode of *reasoning* against them, if they were unscriptural. For you employ the nine following pages in attempting to prove, that they are inconsistent with the language of John the Baptist---our LORD himself—and his Apostles. If you had only called in to your aid the Prophets, who preceded the appearance of our Lord,—which you might have done with equal facility,—you would then have employed *all* the scriptures in attempting to prove---what?—that sinners under the power of *unbelief*, rejecting the concurrent testimony which all the scriptures bear to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, may yet have *repentance unto life*. This Sir, is indeed a very *hopeless* attempt ; but alas ! it is also a very awful one. I proceed with a sigh, but without apprehension of the issue, to examine your arguments.

The first witness you produce to combat my position, that without *faith* in CHRIST there is no *repentance unto life*—no saving change of mind,---is John the Baptist :—the immediate harbinger of the Messiah’s appearance in the flesh produced to testify that sinners may have *repentance unto life*, though

they *disbelieve* his testimony concerning that **MES-SIAH** ! And how is this proved ?—Why—John the Baptist was sent “ before the face of the Lord to prepare his way ;” and therefore the repentance which he preached must be *preparatory* and *preliminary* to faith. Nay, Sir, he “ prepared the way of the Lord,” by announcing that the Messiah, whom the people professed to expect and desire, was immediately about to appear : by declaring that he was sent “ to bear witness of the light, that all men through him might *believe*.” And accordingly he did bear witness to Christ as “ the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,”---as “ above all,—all things given into his hand by the Father.”—He proclaimed “ salvation to his people, by the remission of their sins,—through the tender mercy of God whereby the day-spring from on high had visited them.” His testimony was thus most explicit against that for which you contend ; ---“ he that *believeth* on the Son,” said he, “ hath everlasting life ; and he that *believeth* not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” And most careful was he to guard his hearers against resting in any false view of himself,—in any view of him but that of a *witness* of **CHRIST** “ that **HE** should be made manifest to Israel.”---And from this Preacher of the *faith* of **CHRIST** you endeavour to extort a testimony, in favour of a repentance “ preceding *faith* and unconnected with it”—as *repentance unto life*.

But you urge that the Baptist said—“ Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*.” Why, Sir, this his call to *repentance* is palpably founded on the *Gospel* of **CHRIST**, in the very reason by which it is enforced. The Baptist’s call,—rescued from the cloud of ambiguity in which you have endeavoured to envelope it,—amounts to this :—‘ Ye children of Abraham according to the flesh ! Ye, who profess the *faith* of believing Abraham ;---‘ who expect and desire the appearance of that Re-

' deemer, that King of Israel whose day Abraham
 ' saw afar off,—of whose glorious name and office
 ' and work Moses and all the prophets—sent unto
 ' your nation in times past—have testified? Ye
 ' professors of the faith of Patriarchs and Prophets!
 ' the long expected *appearance* of the King of Israel
 ' is *at hand*. The Lord whom ye seek is about to
 ' come to his Temple. But who shall abide the
 ' day of his coming? and who shall stand when he
 ' appeareth? The thoughts of many *hearts* shall be
 ' revealed. Multitudes, who have professed the
 ' faith of him, shall be *offended at him*,—shall stum-
 ' ble and be broken; and by their rejection of the
 ' true **MESSIAH** when he is revealed, will shew that
 ' they have not had the faith of that Abraham
 ' whom they call their father,—in their natural
 ' descent from whom they pride themselves. Be
 ' ye therefore warned; and prove that you are in-
 ' deed the spiritual children of *believing* Abraham—
 ' that you are really partakers of that *faith* which
 ' you profess,—not by any of your outward cere-
 ' monies, but—by an inward renewal of your
 ' hearts and minds,—by that *repentance unto life*
 ' which distinguishes *true believers*. And evince the
 ' reality of that *repentance*, by bringing forth *fruits*
 ' *suitable* to it; and parting each of you with that
 ' offending right hand or right eye, which are the
 ' characteristic evils prevailing in your several pro-
 ' fessions of life. Let hypocritical professors know
 ' that the axe lyeth at the root of the tree; that no
 ' speciousness of false profession will conceal them
 ' from him whose *eyes are as a flame of fire* :—that
 ' his fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly
 ' purge his floor, and gather his wheat—*his true*
 ' *disciples*—into the garner, but the chaff he will
 ' burn up with unquenchable fire.'

Such, Sir, was the preaching of John the Baptist:—and it would be well for you to have considered its import better, before you represented him as an advocate for *unbelieving repentance*; and before you

indulged the keenness of sarcastic indignation at the truth, in comparing him with the *profane infidel* and *zealous religionist*, of whom I have spoken in my Address ;—and concerning whom I have observed that—...they differ only with respect to the quantity of work to be *done*, “ in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy.”—Let me tell you, Sir, that the Baptist prescribed no *task*, great or small, to be *done* for any such purpose ; but expressly preached the *faith* of **CHRIST** to the chief of sinners—(whom you would think most unqualified for it)—and free remission of sins *in his name* to every one that *believed*. And had he not done so, he would have preached a very different **Gospel** from all the Prophets, and all the Apostles ; and from that which **HE** declared, whose way the Baptist was sent to prepare.

You endeavour to prop up the weak cause which you espouse, by observing that—by the *kingdom of Heaven* which John declares to be at hand, we must understand—“ the *spiritual kingdom* of the Messiah, which *was to be* set up in the hearts of believers :” and that, it not having yet actually *come*, the repentance which he called to must be repentance preliminary to believing. Well, Sir, let us try this argument by applying it to another part of John’s preaching. You cannot deny that he preached **CHRIST**,—the Lamb of God ;—that he called the people to “ *believe on HIM* :”—for so the Apostle Paul expressly asserts—(Acts xix. 4.) ; and so it appears from the whole tenor of his testimony to Christ ;—as it would be rather odd to give a *testimony* that he intended should not be *believed*. But according to you, the *spiritual kingdom* of the **MES-SIAH**—which *was to be* set up in the hearts of *believers*—had not yet actually *come* : so that the *faith* to which he called them must be an *unbelieving faith*,—as you think the *repentance* to which he called them was an *unbelieving repentance* !—I believe I might dismiss your argument here. But let me add, that the expression of the Baptist’s,—“ the **Kingdom**—

of Heaven is at hand"—means neither more nor less than this,—*the promised and long expected King of Israel is about to be openly manifested* :—and that long before his *appearance* in the flesh, at least from the time of Abel, there were *believers*, in whom his *spiritual kingdom* was set up—that kingdom which the Apostle declares to be “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Indeed if it were not so, the true God had no spiritual church or people upon earth—for more than the first four thousand years.

I know it is a very common idea that the gospel was not known, till after the coming of Christ in the flesh; and that—before this—sinners were justified in the sight of God and saved without *faith*, by their good dispositions and good works:—but that now, to be sure, we are called to believe the Gospel in *some* sense or another,—to assent to the proposition that *Christ has come*;—but this, rather as the best *criterion* of good dispositions than any thing else,—and with a perfect license to put our own *meaning*, whatever pleases us best, upon the scriptural testimony about CHRIST, his person, and his work. And the men, who think this, often talk very finely and honourably of the religion of Christ, as the *perfection of the religion of nature*,—carrying it further and higher than man could ever have carried it without him;—and as therefore the *best* of all the religions, that have ever appeared in the world. But indeed those men know nothing of *Christianity* yet; and believe not what the scriptures either of the old or new testament declare. All who have ever been justified in the sight of God and saved since the beginning of the world, have been justified and saved in one and the same way—(here those men will agree with me, unless perhaps they question whether *any* have really been damned):—but not one, except by Christ and through *faith* in him.

The same glorious gospel has been in the world,

since the first promise of God to fallen man:---the same glad tidings, to *lost sinners*, of JEHOVAH the *Saviour*, or (in one word) JESUS;---for the former is but a literal translation of the latter. HE has been testified of in the same character; and not only as the Son of God, but as the Son of Man—“*the seed of the woman*, that shall bruise the serpent’s head;” the *Lord* in whom Israel—(his believing people)—“shall be justified and saved with an everlasting salvation.” The record of him has been the same, whether it pointed to him as yet to appear in the flesh,—or as having appeared, and finished the work of obedience unto death which the Father had given him to do on earth. And all who from the beginning have “known the joyful sound”—or, in other words, have *believed* the *GOSPEL* which proclaims his name,—they and they alone have been justified and saved; whether they lived before his manifestation in the flesh, or since. Their faith and hope and joy have been the same; their *Saviour* and their *God* has been the same; their *Religion* has been the same:—and all Religion but theirs,---whether called the religion of *nature*, or by whatever other name, has been a religion of lies, suggested by the father of lies, to hide the view of the truth;—has been the religion of infidelity;---and its end is destruction.—No wonder that righteous believing Abel (Heb. xi. 4.) fell a victim to the indignation of unbelieving Cain. No wonder that the *little flock* of Christ have been a people ever-hated by the world. (1 John iii. 13.) No wonder that the *religious world*, more especially, is filled with wrath and bitterness, at the testimony borne against their false gods and false hopes. And in the view of the rich Grace which makes believers to differ from those who are yet out of the way,---no wonder that they should rejoice when they are “counted worthy to suffer for his name,” who is their *Saviour*;—and even resign their lives with that language, in which he of old prayed for his

murderers,—“ Father ! forgive them ; for they know not what they do.”

You appear, Sir, to have been secretly half conscious that you stood on weak ground, in arguing from the supposition—that there were not in the Baptist’s time any *believers*, in whose hearts the *spiritual Kingdom* of the Messiah had yet been set up: for you immediately change your form of expression, and observe that he called them to *repentance*—“ before they could have the *spirit of adoption* ;”--- referring your readers for the proof of this to *Acts xix. 1.—5.* and *John vii. 37.—39.* Now, Sir, it might be sufficient for me to reply that, if you mean by having the *spirit of adoption*, the same thing as having the *spirit of Faith*,—or being given to *believe* the record of God concerning the Messiah--- I have already proved, both from the preaching of John the Baptist, and all the scriptures, that this spirit was given long before ; and that to have this spirit was the distinguishing mark of God’s true Israel, from the beginning of the world. But, if you mean by the *spirit of adoption*, something distinct from the *spirit of Faith*, and by having it something distinct from *believing*,—then your argument obviously has nothing at all to do with the question at issue between us. I have asserted that *there is no repentance unto life preliminary to faith* : ---you assert there is, and attempt to prove it by shewing that the Baptist called the people to *repent* before they could have—*faith* ? no ;—but something (on this supposition) altogether different from *faith*. If I had asserted that men cannot walk before they are *alive*, you might just as conclusively set about disproving it, by shewing that they may be exhorted to walk before—they *have wings*.

But with respect to your assertion itself—that men could not at that time have the *spirit of adoption*,—I conceive that it is false ; and I am certain that the passages, to which you refer for the proof of it, are wholly misapplied. The former of them (*Acts xix. 1.—6.*) evidently speaks of the *miracu-*

bus gifts and open effusion of the HOLY GHOST, which took place in the church after our Lord's ascension. And that the latter passage (Jo. vii. 37,—39.) alludes to the same, appears more than probable, from the express reference in it to the prophecies of the old testament—concerning the *pouring out* of the spirit in the latter days—[see for instance Joel ii. 28. 29.) :—which Prophecies the Apostles declared to be accomplished, in that outward and miraculous effusion of the HOLY GHOST, which commenced on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 16, &c.

If the passages, therefore, to which you refer, proved that men could not have the *spirit of adoption* in the days of John the Baptist,—because this visible out-pouring of the Spirit in his miraculous gifts had not yet taken place ;—they would equally prove that men could not have the spirit of adoption *now*, or ever since that visible out-pouring of the Spirit has *ceased*—with the accomplishment of the ends for which it was designed :—an inference ---which, I trust, you, Sir, would not wish to sanction. But in truth the passages have nothing at all to do with the purpose, for which you have quoted them. The spirit of adoption is so distinct from that effusion of the Holy Ghost in his miraculous gifts, to which those texts relate, that either may subsist without the other ;—but is not, I conceive, at all distinct from the spirit of *faith*, or that spirit ---whereby sinners are given to *believe* the glad tidings of the grace of God,—are warranted and emboldened to view and call on him as their “FATHER who is in Heaven.” Such was the language of *believers*, long before the time of John the Baptist :---“doubtless thou art our FATHER, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not ;—thou, O LORD ! art our FATHER---our REDELMER.” And such was the language, which the carnal presumption of *unbelieving* Jews imitated, while our Lord was yet upon earth ; when---warned by him that “ they were of their father the

Devil, and that the lusts of their father they would do" ... they vainly boasted—" we have one Father even God :"—grounding their proud confidence on their natural descent from Abraham. But their boast was repelled by our Lord, as the similar presumption of *unbelieving* professors of Christianity is to be repelled at this day ;—" If God were your Father, ye would love me."

But while I thus contend that the faith of the people of God has been the same from the beginning,—the author, the object, and the fruits of it the same ;—let me not be understood to make light of the superior advantages which believers enjoy, since the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, and since the accomplishment of so many prophecies concerning his incarnation — his work on earth—his sufferings unto death—and the glory that should follow.—The *clearer discovery* of the *same* joyful truths (as well as the wider promulgation of them), which has thus been afforded to the church, renders *the least in the kingdom of Heaven greater than JOHN the BAPTIST* ;—the least believer, —since the shadows have passed away, and the true light has shone by the appearance of the Son of righteousness,—higher in his privileges than the most favoured believer of the same gospel, who preceded that period. This, Sir, I readily—I thankfully concede : but this, rightly understood, detracts not a tittle from the force of my argument.

You next produce the **LORD JESUS** himself, as a witness to prove—that sinners may have *repentance unto life*, who yet *believe not* in him. This attempt Sir, might have been spared ; and I am glad that you forebore to " hurt my feelings or 'fully your own page," by enlarging on it more. You rest your argument—on its being written of him also that he " began to preach, saying *Repent* ; for the kingdom of Heaven is *at hand*." I believe I have already abundantly refuted that argument, in the case of the Baptist : but in this instance it happens very unfor-

tunately for you, that in the parallel passage of the Evangelist Mark—expressions are employed that tear away all the flimsy covering of ambiguous language, by which the weakness of your argument might be concealed—from readers unacquainted with the phraseology of scripture.—“Jesus came into Galilee, *preaching the GOSPEL* of the kingdom of God, “and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom “of God is at hand; *repent ye, and believe the GOSPEL.*” (Mark, i. 14. 15.) Yet you appeal “to all *impartial judgments,*”—(in these matters there is less *impartiality* than you are aware of in the judgments of the unbelieving world; they *bate* the truth)---“whether our Redeemer in thus opening his mission “did not clearly intimate, that they whom he ad-“dressed might *truly repent*,”—though they *believed not the GOSPEL*; “and also that their thus repenting would prove a *preliminary step* to *faith*.—In stating this monstrous inference, which you draw from our Lord’s preaching, I only substitute my own plain words, that you expressly contradict, in place of the equivocal words,—“spirit of adoption” and “ap-“propriate blessings of his spiritual kingdom”—in which you wrap up your sentiments.

I would be very glad to know what you suppose this *true repentance* of an *unbelieving* sinner to consist in;—of a sinner whom our Lord himself so often declared to be a hater of God and a child of the Devil. I perceive indeed that in a subsequent paragraph you give some account of it, which I shall have to take notice of in its place: but it is all couched in metaphorical language. Let me recommend you to speak it plainly; and then I shall have an easier task in shewing—that no one part of it can be *true, genuine, spiritual*, except in those who *believe the gospel*; and that your *unbelieving repentance* “is no more a pre-“liminary step to *faith in Christ*—than *murder* or “*adultery*.”

But you proceed to marshal against my offensive position—the *APOSTLES* of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*.

What ! Sir :—those apostles who were commissioned by him “to preach *in his name* repentance and remission of sins,”—are they too produced by you to prove, that there may be *repentance unto life* (and consequent remission of sins) *without faith in his name*? But let me curb the feelings, which such an attempt must excite in a believer of the truth ; and calmly proceed to vindicate it against you.—

You own that the Messiah’s spiritual kingdom had now come ; though here also you misapply a text (Mark ix. 1.), the accomplishment of which had not at that time taken place. But you go on to say—“on the day of pentecost the *terror of an alarmed conscience* produced in those who had come together *sorrow for sin and solicitude about the things of salvation.*” Stop a moment, Sir :—the words which you here mark in Italicks are borrowed from that offensive passage of my address which you are opposing ; and in which I have said that there may be such *sorrow* and such *solicitude* produced by the *terror of an alarmed conscience*, without any *real* repentance—or—*repentance unto life*,—because without any work of saving *faith* in the heart ; which faith, I have asserted, must ever accompany and produce *true* repentance. Now let us see how far the instance you are producing from scripture, will support my assertion—or your contradiction of it. I resume your words :—“ they therefore say to the Apostles, *Men and brethren what shall we do?*” Peter forthwith answered—*REPENT and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins.*” Well, Sir,—it undeniably follows from this, that Peter thought with me, that all their *sorrow for sin and solicitude about the things of salvation* which sprung from the *terror of an alarmed conscience*, constituted not true repentance ; for while they manifest all that sorrow and solicitude, he yet calls them to *repent*. So far—the passage is point-blank with me, and against you.

But you ask whether it does not from this passage,

"inevitably follow—that in St Peter's judgment re-
"pentance was a *preliminary step* to saving *faith*?"
...I answer your question with saying—that the con-
trary inevitably follows from it: it inevitably fol-
lows that in St. Peter's judgment there can be—as I
have asserted—no *true* repentance—no repentance *unto*
life previous to *faith*, or unconnected with it; but
that he considered *repentance*—(as I have stated it)
---to be "that *new mind* of which we are made par-
takers when we are given to *believe* with the heart
on the Son of God."—For, if he concluded not *faith*
in Christ in his idea of *repentance*, then he called
them not to believe in him at all;—then he preach-
ed to them *remission of sins* independently of Christ
and unconnected with the faith of him; nay he call-
ed them to be *baptized* in his name previous to *be-*
lieving in him.

The fact is, Sir, that—in calling them to *repent*
...the Apostle called them to do nothing else, than
to be of *another mind* towards the **LORD** Jesus than
that mind of *unbelief* which they had hitherto mani-
fested. In the preceding part of his address he had
charged them plainly with the wickedness of their
unbelieving rejection of him; and had testified to
them that "GOD had made that same JESUS, whom
they had crucified, both **LORD** and **CHRIST**,"—his
Anointed one,—to whom that work of salvation---
in which all the Prophets had foretold him—exclu-
sively belonged. And when interrogated by the mul-
titude with that question, "What shall we *do*?"---
(a question very natural to men struck by the ex-
traordinary display of divine power which they be-
held, and assured by the Apostles that it was a dis-
play of the kingly power of that JESUS, whom they
"by wicked hands had crucified and slain, but whom
GOD had raised up,"—assured that HE had "shed
forth that which they then saw and heard")—when
thus interrogated by the alarmed multitude, Peter
directed them—not to any *preliminary step* to be-
lieving in him—but to believe in him as the **CHRIST**

...to *repent*, or be of *another mind* towards him than they had before;—(and if their former mind was *unbelieving*, this *new mind* to which they are called must be the mind of *faith*)—and to be “baptized every one of them *in his name* for the remission of sins.” He directs them to no *preparatory* works that they should “*do* in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy;” but—amidst all the load of sin which lay upon them, as the *betrayers and murderers* of the Prince of life—he at once points them to Him as the *saviour of sinners*; and proclaims remission of sins to them through faith in his name.

And accordingly, what was the result? “*They that gladly received his word*”—a word which according to your misinterpretation of it, did not call them to believe in Christ at all—“*they that gladly received his word*”—or *believed* his testimony of the **LORD JESUS**,—“*were baptized*—the same day—and continued *steadfastly* in the *Apostles’ doctrine* and *fellowship*, and in *breaking of bread* and in *prayers*;” ...joined “*together*—having all things *common*—eating their meat with *gladness* and *singleness* of heart—praising **God**—and having *favour* with all the people.”

Such was the glorious result in them that *believed*: while the rest, whatever *sorrow for sin* and *solicitude* and *alarm* had been excited in them, remained as they were before—dead in sins and enemies of the cross of Christ,—nor brought one *step* nearer to **God**, by all their infidel conviction or infidel *repentance*, than the murderer or adulterer. Yet many of them, no doubt, prided themselves in their self righteousness,—in what they had *done* or could “*do* in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy;” and scornfully rejected that gospel which put them on a level with the *vilest*—by proclaiming pardon and righteousness and eternal life to *all whosoever believed* in the **LORD JESUS**—If the limits of this letter allowed me to draw the contrast—between the mode of the *Apostle’s address* to that multitude, and the mode

in which we might conceive them to be addressed by the grave and pious advocates for *preliminary steps to faith in Christ*—(whether under the name of a *sound law-work*—or a *preparatory repentance*—or whatever other name)—a striking contrast indeed would be afforded. The enlightened observer will be at no loss to see as striking a contrast between the effects.

But you adduce the similar expression which the same Apostle used, in addressing the multitude—assembled on occasion of the healing of the man lame from his birth. On that occasion also, Peter having testified to them that GOD had *glorified his Son JESUS—the Holy one and the Just*,—that JESUS, whom they had *delivered up—denied—and killed*—but of whose *resurrection* from the dead the Apostles were witnesses; having declared to them *that those things which GOD had before shown by the mouth of all his prophets, he had so fulfilled*;—he adds in the words which you quote, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” And from this passage also, you ask whether “it does not inevitably follow, that in St. Peter’s judgment *repentance was a preliminary step to saving faith?*” --- The imposing tone of confidence, with which such questions are put, is the only thing that renders them dangerous. No, Sir,—I repeat my former answer:—the contrary inevitably follows.—Otherwise, the Apostle directed them to some other way for their sins being blotted out, than through the *faith* of that SAVIOUR whom he had so expressly preached to them.—Nay—on your supposition—he gave them to understand, that their sins would be blotted out, though they should continue to *disbelieve* the testimony of Christ. For he certainly gives them to understand, that their sins would be blotted out if they should *repent and be converted*: which you contend was but a *preliminary step to saving faith*. And in this case, it is hard to say what you mean, by attributing to FAITH the epithet of *saving* at all; for salvation then accompanies some *unbelieving repentance*.

From the use you make of that quotation, it appears that you conceive that *conversion* also, as well as *repentance*, precedes saving *faith*; for the same inference, which you assert inevitably follows about the one, must as inevitably follow about the other. Now do, Sir, seriously consider this question:—if sinners—yet under the power of *unbelief*—may, notwithstanding, have *repentance unto life* and be *converted to God*, and so (according to the Apostle) may have *remission of sins*;—may they not—must not such sinners be saved—whether they ever *believe in Christ* or not? whether, or not, they ever take that *further step*, to which you consider *repentance* and *conversion* as *preliminary*? And in that case, must we not—to be at all consistent—lay aside the talk of *saving FAITH*? And may we not as well lay aside the *GOSPEL of CHRIST* altogether; and set about making sinners *good men*, and calling them to *repent* and *turn to God*, without perplexing them with those offensive *doctrines* of the cross of Christ?—In fact, those who really hold such systems, as you attempt to vindicate, have laid aside the *GOSPEL* altogether; though decency and fear make them still encumber themselves—with something essentially different, under the same name. And to this class belong all those who really hold that any thing is to be *done* by the sinner “in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy;”—that any sinner is more or less authorized or warranted than another to *believe* the gospel of his grace;—or that *any sinner who believes it*, without having *done* any thing that could be a *preliminary step to faith in Christ*, is not in that gospel assured of salvation.

You assert, Sir, that—*on my plan*—“St. Peter ought not to have called on them to repent, until they could believe that their sins *were blotted out*.” And among all the extraordinary assertions which I have had to combat in your letter, I know not one more extraordinary than this. Let us observe what you call *my plan*, and I call the *Apostolic*—the scriptur-

al plan.—I have asserted that sinners—previous to their believing in Christ have no *repentance unto life* ;—and that whosoever believeth in him has *true*—repentance and has *remission of sins*. Hence—(to borrow your expression) it *inevitably follows* that, until they repent and believe the Gospel, they have no scriptural warrant for believing that their sins are *blotted out* :—and that any—either *humble hope* or *strong confidence* which they cherish, that their sins are blotted out—while they continue to disbelieve the Gospel of Christ, and therefore continue *inpenitent*,—is nothing else than the delusive expectation of infidel presumption. Yet you assert that, upon this plan, they “ought not to be called on to repent—until they can believe that their sins are blotted out!”—while the essential character of the plan, against which you contend, is this,---that *no* sinner can be warranted to believe that his sins are blotted out—until he has “that *new mind*—or *repentance*—of which we are made partakers, when we are given to believe with the heart on the Son of God.” You assertion is so extraordinary, that I am indeed at a loss to account for it from *you* ; especially as—upon this subject—you appear to have so clearly understood my meaning, while you were warmly indignant at it, that I cannot suppose you mistook the plan, from which you attempt to draw such a preposterous inference.

I need say nothing upon the next sentence in your remarks ; as you only beat the air in opposing a notion, which cannot be more inconsistent with your plan, than it is with mine.—But at the close of the paragraph, you seem to return to the point, from which we set out. Again quoting the Apostle’s words, “repent—that your sins may be blotted out”—or (as you prefer translating them) “IN ORDER to your sins being blotted out ;”—you ask with an air of triumph—“if this does not describe one “thing as a *preliminary step* to another, what terms “in language could?” that is, Sir,—(if your ques-

tion mean any thing connected with the subject in debate, and be not introduced merely to impose on inattentive readers—a supposition which I cannot admit for a moment when I consider who my antagonist is)—it describes *repentance* as a *preliminary step to faith in CHRIST*. Can you, Sir,—a gentleman versed in the meaning of language,—can you deliberately assert that it describes any such thing? Must you not acknowledge, that the two *things* mentioned in the apostle's words, one of which you call a *preliminary step* to the other, are—the one—*repentance*—and the other—*the blotting out of sins*? And because *repentance* is declared to be essential that our *sins* may be *blotted out*, or (as you choose strangely to express it) to be a *preliminary step* to the *blotting out of sins*,—do you mean to infer that *repentance* is a *preliminary step to faith in CHRIST*? ---It would be an inference, as good as many that you have drawn; but such an one as indeed is most puzzling to an antagonist. It is very puzzling to cope with that, which—like an unsubstantial phantom—“is, as the air, invulnerable.”---I shall hasten to resume the subject in my next.

I remain, Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
Sept. 15. 1803.

LETTER VI.

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S R,

THE more frequently I read that paragraph in your Letter, which next offers itself to my consideration—the more unable I am to conjecture what rational bearing you intended it should have upon the question at issue between us;—whether *repentance unto life* be (as you assert) a *preliminary step to saving faith*,—or (as I assert) that *change of mind* of which we are 'made partakers, when we

are given to believe with the heart on the Son of God, and not till then.

You produced authorities from the preaching of John the Baptist, our Lord himself, and his Apostles; all of which I have shewn in my last letter, are decisive against that *preliminary* sense for which you contend:—and you now observe—“ that the mere *Etymology* of either a Greek or a Hebrew word ought to weigh little against *such authorities*;” but that you cannot see that the terms translated *repentance* and *repent* in the New Testament, “ contain any idea *incongruous*” with that sense. Allow me to ask you, Sir, is there a shadow of opposition between the *etymological* meaning of the words which I have assigned in my Address, and their application in those passages of scripture which you produce? Let me ask you again, did I borrow any argument from the mere *etymological* meaning of the words, to support that assertion about the *nature* of *repentance*, which you controvert? Your expressions appear to imply the affirmative of both these questions: but your good sense and candour, I am persuaded, will not let you hesitate to acknowledge that they are both to be answered in the negative.

You say,—“ that the terms are generally so used as to imply a *moral change*, is certain; but that *this* meaning is necessarily conveyed, may be disputed.”—For me, Sir, you will have that dispute to yourself. Where have I asserted or intimated, that the meaning of a *moral change* is necessarily conveyed by the terms? I did observe that “ the simple import of the word translated *repentance* is—a *change of mind*”—or a *transition* from one mind, thought, or purpose, to another: and I stated, from scripture, what constitutes *repentance unto life*, or a *saving change of mind*, and when it takes place. On that question you have warmly opposed me: but we shall have no dispute, Sir, on the question whether there may not be *repent-*

tance, or a *change of mind*, without any *moral change*. I thought I had asserted that myself very explicitly.—I again readily concede it; and what does it make for your argument?

But it is with some astonishment that I read the next sentence, in which you call in question the literal meaning that I have assigned to the Greek word; and say that “the strict sense is not *change of mind*, but *efficient reconsideration*.”—You quote Greek, Sir; and you own at the close of your pamphlet, that you know enough of it—“to follow a critical clue, when afforded you by another.”—Excuse me, however, for saying, that every smatterer in the language knows, that the strict sense of the Greek word rendered *Repentance*, is—*change of mind*, and is NOT *efficient reconsideration*; knows that neither *efficiency* of any kind enters into its strict sense at all, nor *reconsideration* either,—unless so far as this may in some cases be the occasion of a *change of mind*. If I were as fond as many others of making a shew of learning, I could here easily, like them, display a great deal more of it than I possess. But upon this *little* question—any detailed confirmation of my assertion must only make every scholar smile, and the unlearned—stare. To satisfy you, however, that I do not contradict you so positively without sufficient authority, allow me to refer you to Viger. de Idiot. ed. Zeun. p. 639. and to any or all of the following compilers of Lexicons to the Greek Testament—Schwarz, Schleusner, Krebs, Parkhurst, Stock; and even Mintert and Leigh. In examining these and other writers of the same class, you will need to distinguish between what they say as Lexicographers, and what they often absurdly blend with it as Divines.

But in fact, Sir, I will not allow the *great* question in debate between us, to be entangled in any of the intricacies of human learning. It is a question, upon which a mere English reader, with the English Bible in his hands, is as competent to judge

as you or I : and I willingly accept that expression of —*coming to himself*,—which you “take to be a strict and beautiful paraphrase” of the Greek verb translated *Repent*. The question still recurs—when a sinner can be said—truly to *come to himself*: whether before he believes the gospel, or when he believes it. You maintain the former ; and that *true repentance* is but a *preliminary step to faith* :—I maintain the latter ; and that any repentance previous to faith, “while we are yet under the power of *unbelief*,” is spurious, and “no more a preliminary step to faith than murder and adultery.” I thus repeat the plain state of the question, in order that the reader may perceive that it does not turn at all (as you have intimated) upon the mere etymology of a Greek word ; and that, in accompanying me through your remaining observations on the subject, he may not lose sight of the real question—in the cloud of ambiguous language in which you at times involve it ;—though at other times your language is sufficiently precise to prove that you understood what the question was, and intended to give a decided opposition to my sentiments upon it.

Having premised this, I now follow the course of your remarks.—“*Therefore*,” you say, “when we “find both our Lord and his Apostles so solemnly “commencing their instructions with *repent*, can we “doubt that the precise amount of the exhortation “was, *come to yourselves—awake from the delirium “of a sinful state—that ye may be PREPARED for “the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s Kingdom?*” Let us put the latter part of the sentence out of its present vague language, and say—(what it appears from your own statement elsewhere you must have meant)—*that ye may be prepared to believe the Gospel, or may take a PRELIMINARY STEP to saving faith*. Now, Sir, you begin this sentence with the particle *therefore*: and you know that implies an inference, or deduction of what follows from what went before. And really it is the second *THEREFORE* in this para-

graph; the illative force of which I am wholly at a loss to comprehend. But alas ! so many readers are carried away by the mere sound of words, that an argumentative *language*, without any reasoning, is often more effectual for supporting and propagating error, than real argument. The latter is easily detected by those who know the truth ; but the former is always dangerous from its imposing *colour*, and affords no *substance* for its opposers to handle. “ THEREFORE”—that is—because you take *coming to oneself* to be “ a strict and beautiful paraphrase of the verb” rendered to *repent*,—can we doubt that true repentance, or truly *coming to ourselves*, is a preliminary step to believing the Gospel,—a step which sinners may take while yet under the power of unbelief? Indeed, Sir, I more than doubt it: I am certain of the contrary. I am certain that every sinner, who still disbelieves the Gospel, has not yet truly *come to himself*, but is still in *the delirium of a sinful state*; whatever infidel repentance or conviction he may have. You see that I take your own expressions, by which you choose to paraphrase the word *repentance*; though they are expressions which seem to me only *figuratively* to denote that *change of mind*, which I observed is the *literal* import of the word.

I have before shewn at large, in opposition to you, that our Lord and his Apostles from the commencement of their preaching, and throughout it, preached the Gospel: so that you must look for some other argument, to prove that the repentance they called to was *unbelieving repentance*, beside the mere circumstance of their *commenc ing* their instructions with it. But let me add—that I would not think I departed at all from the character of a minister of the Gospel, or spoke at all inconsistently with the principles which you controvert, if—in addressing an un believing multitude—I *commenced* my instructions with a testimony against the sinfulness of their state, as alienated from the true God,—against the corrup-

tions of their hearts and minds as enmity to him ; and with a declaration of the necessity of an inward *change of mind*, in order to serve him acceptably in spirit and in truth : and all this—before I said a word explicitly about Christ and his salvation.

But I would think that I departed from the character of a minister of Christ, if I did not at the same time declare to them the revealed character of the true God, as “ a just God and a Saviour”—“ just and the justifier of the ungodly ;”—if I did not at the same time declare to them that “ glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” in the knowledge and faith of which alone sinners can really turn to the true God, and can serve him with acceptance. I would think that I departed from the character of a minister of Christ, to that of an agent of Antichrist, if—according to your principles—I put them upon *doing* any thing “ in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy ;” if I forbore to preach Christ to them as the Saviour of sinners, till they had taken a *preliminary step* of some infidel repentance that they might be “ *prepared* for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom”—or prepared to believe in him ;—if I did not proclaim to them the *exceeding riches* of the *grace* of God, and the *effectual working of his power*, and his complete *salvation*,—including *present acceptance in the beloved* and an *inheritance among all them that are sanctified*—as free unto all (without any difference) who should *believe* the joyful tidings. I would think that I departed from the character of a minister of Christ, and dealt treacherously with their souls, if I gave them to understand that any of them could *truly repent* or turn to God, while they continued to *disbelieve* this glorious Gospel ;—that any *unbelieving* sorrow for sin, or alarm of conscience, or solicitude about eternal things, brought them one step nearer to its blessings ;—or that all its blessings were not immediately *sure* to every one among them who should really *believe* the faithful record,—to those whom you would represent as

most unprepared for believing it, just as much as to those whom you would think most prepared—from having been under the longest *preliminary* training.

You say “that the precise amount of the exhortation,” which our Lord addressed to the people in calling them to repent, “was—*come to yourselves—awake from the delirium of a sinful state—that ye may be PREPARED for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom:*”—that is, Sir, its precise amount was in short this—*Become GOOD men—that ye may be FIT to believe the Gospel.* But let me remind you that the Gospel is good news of a SAVIOUR for *sinners*.—for ruined and ungodly sinners; that all the spiritual blessings of his kingdom which it reveals are adapted to the situation and wants of *such*, and revealed as the *free gift* of God *in him* to every one that *believeth* in his name: and that, as long as any disbelieve that testimony, they continue under the power of darkness and of sin, however they may boast of having sight and freedom. How then can such be said to have *come to themselves*, and to have *awaked from the delirium of a sinful state?* In truth they are just as much beside themselves, and as much in a delirium, when they are filled with the most poignant—but unbelieving sorrow for sin, and with the most lively—but unbelieving—solicitude about eternal things,—when they are putting forth the most strenuous efforts to attain unto righteousness by the deeds of the law, by *doing* something—(no matter how little or how much)—“in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy,”—as when they are most careless and unconcerned, and giving the freest loose to open profligacy and irreligion.

Say not, Sir, that—in asserting this—I give encouragement to the openly profligate and irreligious, to continue in that state. It is a state—in which if they continue they will perish; in which they are far from God and far from righteousness: but not a whit farther then those, who are most busily and

earnestly engaged in the *religion of infidelity*. Nor shall the one more assuredly perish than the other, except they repent and believe the Gospel. And to call sinners to that kind of repentance which you maintain to be *repentance unto life*, is but calling them to embrace a *false religion*, that they may be prepared to receive the *true* ;—is but calling them to be zealous worshippers of *idols*, that they may be fit to become servants of JEMOVAH.

You proceed to account for your dwelling so long on the subject of *repentance* ; and you assign its importance as the cause. Here, Sir,—we are perfectly agreed. Most cordially do I assent to your observation, that “error in judgment here leads naturally to error in practice.” Yes ;—I am persuaded that “wrong notions” upon this subject are the destruction of thousands who least suspect that they are in the *broad way*. And I am glad that you have saved me the trouble of making any apology for the prolixity and minuteness, with which I discuss the subject, and examine the question—which of our *notions* upon it are *wrong* and *unscriptural*,—whether yours or mine. But it is lamentable to observe that you could not even assert the importance of this doctrine, without involving the assertion in a mass of error and misrepresentation, to which it becomes necessary for me to advert.—Quoting a passage from my *Address*, (page 37. 2d ed.) you represent my expressions as relating to—“the mere meaning of the *term* *justification* ;” while the reader who takes the trouble of turning to the passage, will see at once that they are expressly applied by me to the *doctrine* of a sinner’s *justification* in the sight of God.

To establish the importance of the doctrine of *repentance*, it was not necessary, Sir, to decry as unimportant the doctrine of *justification*. According to Scripture, they are so inseparably interwoven, that they must stand or fall together ; and we find accordingly that all, who are erroneous in the one are correspondently erroneous in the other. Those who deny

the declarations of God's word, concerning the only way of a sinner's acceptance or justification in his sight—through the obedience unto death of “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” and as the *free gift* of God to *every one that believeth*,—will be always found, while they insist on *repentance*, to speak of a false and unbelieving repentance, by which they vainly think that sin will be more or less taken away, and the sinner made an object of the divine favour. And those who conceive *repentance unto life* to consist in any other change of mind than that which is wrought in every sinner who *believes* the Gospel,—to consist in anything which they consider a *preliminary step* to believing, and what puts the sinner in a *fair way* for obtaining God's grace *,—let them at times talk ever so finely of the doctrines of *grace* and of *justification* by *faith alone*,—will be always found, to employ the words in a sense utterly subversive of their real *evangelical* import: and while they speak a gospel *language*, and by it impose on many hearers, have a secret meaning as opposite to the gospel, as any of those against whom they sometimes verbally contend.—Such men, if preachers, will get a name in the *religious world*—as *evangelical*; may be followed and admired by crowds, who think themselves *evangelical*: while they know nothing of “the true grace of God,”—and manifest that they hate it—by their opposition to its faithful witnesses. And they will commonly be borne with, if not liked, by the *irreligious world*; and come under that woe which our Lord has denounced against those—of whom “all men speak well.”

But you take some pains, Sir, to prove the comparative unimportance of the doctrine of *justification*. “*Justification*,” you say very truly, “is God's work;” but *repentance* “is man's duty:” and you add that “to have mistaken notions of what God is to do for us, is not necessarily more than error of judgment.” Stop, Sir:—the same God who “com-

* See postscript.

mandeth all men every where to *repent*,” commandeth them to “believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John iii. 23.) ; commandeth “repentance and remission of sins”—or justification—to be preached—“*in his name*.” His inspired witnesses have testified “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts xx. 21.) : and let no man put asunder what God hath joined. Justification is *his* work and *his* gift—(so indeed is repentance) ; —but he has declared to whom and how it is given. And though you think that “to have mistaken notions on this subject is not necessarily more than *error of judgment*,” the word of God declares—“he that believeth not God hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.” (1 John v. 10.)

You say that “this alone, if we be *upright* in heart, will scarcely stop the course of his mercy.” Sir, nothing will *stop the course of his mercy* :—but the Scripture acknowledges no *uprightness* of heart in the *unbelieving* sinner. “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not *upright* in him ; but the just shall live by *faith*.” (Heb. ii. 4. Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11.) The sinner who has not *faith*, is *lifted up*—in proud opposition to the revealed counsel of God ; and though you may represent him as “sincere and earnest in seeking God’s mercy and grace,” the scriptures represent him as under condemnation and blindly fighting against God—in that very strenuous effort which you admire to establish his own righteousness ; and as stumbling at the foundation laid in Zion—in his refusal to *submit himself unto the righteousness of God*. (Rom. x. 3, 4.)—That this proud and blind rebelliousness “against the God of all grace” is the natural sin of all men, is certain : and it is as certain that it will not *stop the course of God’s mercy* ; for his grace, or mercy, “reigns through righteousness unto eternal life,”—triumphing over all the opposition of the sinner’s heart and of the power of darkness, and forming to himself

a people who “ shall be willing in the day of his power.” But it is no less certain that, wherever that sovereign mercy takes its course, it produces this effect, and operates in this way—of subduing the sinner “ to the obedience of *faith* :” and that as long as men continue to *disbelieve* the Gospel, they continue dead in sins and strangers to the grace of God ; and if they continue to *disbelieve* it to the end of their lives,—in spite of all their fancied *uprightness* of heart, and *sincerity* and *earnestness* in ‘doing much “ in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy,”’—they shall die eternally. But they shall die—not (as you intimate) because they misapply a name—but because they “ *reject* the counsel of God against themselves,” and persist in seeking—what they call salvation—in a way against which God has testified as inconsistent with his essential righteousness and truth, and in which therefore no sinner *can* be saved—unless he can overcome the Almighty.

You go on, Sir, to enforce the great importance of the doctrine of *repentance*, and the great danger of having *wrong notions* about it. On this point—I have told you that we are fully agreed, while I totally dissent from your ideas of the comparative *unimportance* of the doctrine of *justification*. And I think you as deeply erroneous in the manner, in which you attempt to shew—the dangerous consequences that you apprehend from the doctrine of *repentance*, as I have stated it. I must quote the passage at length, because it contains so much misrepresentation and mistake ; and at the same time forms one of the most popular objections to the Gospel. Your words are as follows:—“ But if a hearer of “ yours should *infer* from what you have said of *re-
pentance*, that he is *neither to cease to do evil, nor
learn to do well*, but to go on in his own evil ways “ until a new heart and a new spirit shall be given “ to him from above ; is there not a much greater “ probability that such a man’s heart should become “ more and more hardened through the *deceitfulness of*

“*sin*, than that he should be surprised into that happy state, on which (*I must say*) he would so presumptuously speculate?”—And so *must I say*. Presumptuous speculation it would be indeed; one instance of the presumption and folly of *that evil heart of unbelief*, which rejects the testimony of God. And considering how few are—(as you choose to express it)—“surprised into that happy state” of those who believe the Gospel,—considering how few obtain that *precious faith* which characterizes the *little flock of Christ*,—considering (I say) the comparative numbers of those to whom it is ever given to believe and of the world that “lieth in the wicked one,”—I am ready to admit that there *appears* a much greater probability that such a man will be suffered to go on hardened in his presumptuous infidelity—till he perish, than that he will prove a subject of the grace of God.

But while—on the ground and in the sense which I have mentioned—I readily admit this, I must tell you plainly that it is just as *probable* that even he should prove a subject of rich and saving grace, as that the *carnal penitent* should—whom you and Mr. Fletcher, with all the unbelieving world, imagine to be in so much a *fairer way* for salvation. Both are at present under the power of unbelief, and in a state of hostility against the true God. Both are *presumptuously speculating* in opposition to his revealed word. The infidelity of the one works in a form, that perhaps produces murder and adultery:—the equal infidelity of the other in a form, that produces much zeal about *self-devised religion*, sincere and earnest efforts to establish his own righteousness, and to *do* much “in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy.” He can be brought to *repent* and believe the Gospel by nothing—except that sovereign mercy of God which he is opposing, but the course of which nothing can stop. And if ever he be made partaker of *repentance unto life*, he will be brought to see “the exceeding riches of the grace” of God and “the

effectual working of his power"—in casting down the imaginations and high thoughts that now are exalting themselves against the knowledge of God: and he will then no longer suppose that his brother—the despised Publican—needs a *greater stretch* of divine grace to save him, than himself: he will be brought to understand the value of those scriptures—"Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed:—for there is *no difference* between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto *all* that call upon him:—for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Rom. x. 11, 12, 13.)

But I now, Sir, come closer to the question which you have proposed in order to shew the dangerous tendency of my notions of *repentance*. You ask whether—if a hearer of mine should draw a certain *inference* from what I have said—of *repentance*—it be not very *probable* that he will be damned: and I have answered your question in the affirmative. Well:—what then? Why—if the inference, which you *suppose* him to draw,—be a fair inference from what I have said of *repentance*,—if it be one that a person who really believes what I have said *can rationally* draw,—then I must acknowledge that it constitutes a valid objection against me. But if not—if it be an inference in which there is nothing of what logicians call *vis consequentiae*;—if on the contrary it be one absolutely repugnant with the principles which I have asserted, and one which a man who truly believes those principles *cannot* draw from them,—then you, Sir, must acknowledge that your question is perfectly irrelevant. And here let me observe that the Gospel, which the Apostles preached of old, was in their day objected against as warranting that most terrible inference—"let us continue in sin, that grace may abound,"—"let us do evil that good may come:" so that the mere circumstance—of a similar objection being advanced against

my doctrine now—forms no presumptive argument that my doctrine is different from the Apostolic.

Let us now examine the inference, which you *suppose* a man to draw from what I have said of repentance. It is this—“that he is *neither to cease to do evil, nor learn to do well*; but to go on in his own evil ways, until *a new heart and a new spirit* shall be given to him from above.” In order to make this a legitimate inference, I must have asserted or intimated one or other of two things;—either that a sinner *may* without condemnation and ruin go on in his evil ways,—or that although he be subject to condemnation for them he *cannot help continuing* in them—even if he *believe* what I tell him,—but must *wait* to be surprised with some farther supernatural gift, before he *can* turn from them. And to both these ideas the system of divine truth which you oppose, is directly contrary. It proclaims death as the wages—the *deserved* and *appointed* recompence of all sin:—it proclaims that, unless saved from their sins—from both the guilt and power of them,—sinners shall perish everlastinglly. I ask you, Sir, *can* the sinner believe this and *infer* that he *is to go on* in his evil ways without condemnation and ruin?—It proclaims a Saviour for sinners—for the chief of sinners,—who “saves his people from their sins,”—who “brings them unto God” with full acceptance, having for this very purpose “once suffered *the just for the unjust*”—and who is “sent to bless them in turning away every one of them from his iniquities.” (Acts iii. 26.) It proclaims free and full salvation in his name—*eternal life* as the *GIFT of GOD in HIM*—to *every one* that *believeth* the joyful sound. It invites—it commands upon the authority of God *all men every where to repent*—(or be of a new mind)—to *believe* the glorious Gospel—and *believing* it, to *turn to the Lord*; testifying that whoso *believeth* shall be saved, and whoso *believeth not* shall be damned.” I ask you, Sir, *can* the sinner believe this, and conceive that he must *wait* for any thing

before he turns to the Lord? *Can* he believe this,—can he see life and death set before him—death in his sins—and life in God the *Saviour of sinners*,—and not turn willingly—thankfully—devotedly—to the God of Salvation? *Can* he believe the Gospel—(with the *faith of which* I have asserted that *repentance unto life* is inseparably connected)—and not have repentance unto life,—not have “a new heart and a new spirit?” *Can* he really believe what I have asserted, and draw that *inference* from it which you suppose? No, Sir; he *cannot* rationally; and he certainly *will not*: for it is by the spirit of God he is *given to believe* this glorious Gospel of our salvation, and by the same spirit he shall be led—“walking in Christ Jesus as he has received him.” Shew me a man that *pretends* to draw such an inference from the Gospel which I have declared,—and I will shew you a man that believes it not,—and whose *presumptuous speculation* springs from his *disbelieving* it. And do you, Sir, seriously advance, as an objection against what I have said, that *presumptuous speculation* that can only arise from *not believing* what I have said?—We read in the word of God of those who “wrest all the scriptures unto their own destruction.” (2 Peter iii. 16.) Yet these scriptures are declared to be “able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. iii. 15.) I need not be much alarmed by an objection against my doctrine, which equally lies against the word of God.

But I do not at all wonder that men, who do not believe the Gospel—but are at the same time warm friends of *virtue* and *piety*,—should be very uneasy lest the interests of religion and morality may suffer by the plain and faithful declaration of the Gospel. Blind to the glory of the truth, they cannot conceive its powerful and sanctifying influence on those who know it; and incredulous about the faithfulness of God to his word of promise, they cannot be satisfied that the *believer* is “born of God,” and shall be

“led in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Such men if they make an evangelical profession—(as it often happens)—are the men who set about what they term—*guarding the Gospel*,—securing the interests of piety and virtue, while they speak (as they think) evangelically. And perhaps they will occasionally say every thing which, understood in a scriptural sense, would be the Gospel; but always in such a manner, and accompanied with such guards and modifications, that they *cannot* be understood in an evangelical sense by those, who do not already know the scriptural meaning of the words they employ. And that they do not intend that evangelical sense, or wish to be understood in it, is manifest—from their apprehensiveness that their hearers will become *immoral* and *irreligious*, if they should take them so. Those are very *wise* and *prudent* in their own conceit; but they shall be “taken in their own craftiness;” and the folly of their thoughts shall be exposed, in attempting to correct and improve “the wisdom of God;”—while his glorious Gospel, in spite of all their efforts to disguise and corrupt it, shall win its way,—shall *guard* itself,—and prove the “*power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.*”

Nor let any of them, who may see this testimony against their unbelief and perhaps be made sore by it, suppose that I am an advocate for the equally unscriptural preaching of those who—in order to avoid the error which I have marked—lay aside some truths of scripture, as if they were needless (if not unprofitable) to the believer:—who think it necessary, in order to preach the *GOSPEL* plainly and faithfully to be always speaking of Election and Predestination and the divine decrees; and often speak of them with a rashness and in a connection which little becomes worms of the dust, and is nowhere countenanced in the word of God. Such men also, while they often think themselves eminently *evangelical*, often shew that they know nothing of

"the true grace of God ;" and that they are ^{as} hostile to the real principles, from which both Gospel joy and Gospel holiness spring as any whom the despise as *legal*. That the man who really disbelieves the doctrine of *election*, for instance,—cannot really believe the Gospel, is certain. But it is as certain that a man may be a zealous champion for that and similar doctrines, without knowing or believing a tittle of the gospel. He may be very fond of these doctrines as finding in them a prop to the confidence, which he cherishes about his own state—and his final salvation; while that confidence is derived from a source perfectly different from the great truth—that "CHRIST has DIED FOR THE UNGODLY ;" and while he only betrays the false foundation on which his confidence is built—by his aversion to certain truths of God, which he is desirous to suppress.

But to return from this little digression.—I have shewn, Sir, the futility of your attempt to fasten the charge of error in doctrine, or dangerousness in practice, upon the views which I have given of *repentance*. I have shewn that your views of the subject are utterly repugnant with scripture:—and while you think them so salutary in practice, allow me plainly to warn you of the *peculiarly pernicious consequences*—(to borrow your own words) with which they are *pregnant*. That they may prompt many to much strictness and zealous efforts in morality and religion, I readily acknowledge. They have done so, and they daily do so. But they will lead any, who continue to act upon them, to eternal ruin. Thousands of the *religious world*—in the Methodist Society and out of the Methodist Society—are walking in the broad way to destruction, while they take precisely that path to which you direct them. You charge my doctrine, Sir, with an inference, which you *suppose* some one to draw from it, and which no man can rationally draw from it, and which the man who believes it *will not attempt* to draw;—but I charge your doctrine with its inevitable consequence to those who really adopt it.

The man who believes the doctrine which you oppose—will be saved; and the man who to the end believes the doctrine which you assert—will be damned. This is a charge—not to be advanced lightly: and it is with mature consideration and deep solemnity that I advance it,—and am ready to maintain it from the word of God, against all who shall be offended at the charge.

The sinner who believes what you have said of repentance, *must* believe that he is to *do* something in order to be “*prepared* for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom;” that there must be some *good change* in him, before he can be warranted to believe the Gospel as glad tidings; that he must in some way or another take away or lessen his sin, in order to be *fit* for coming to Christ. And I will suppose you to have the utmost success with him that you can aim at:—I will suppose that he is excited to the most *lively solicitude* to perform this task,—that he puts forth the most *strenuous efforts* to become a good and a pious man “in order to obtain God’s grace and mercy;” and that he succeeds in obtaining all the *preparation* you could wish for—what you call *saving faith*. And now I say that you have only succeeded, at most, in forming an *infidel religionist* out of an *infidel profligate*; that all his works, which you think have brought him so near the kingdom of Heaven, have—as works of unbelief—been pointed against the gospel of that kingdom, to the proud rejection of Christ, and in hostile opposition to the true God:—that, instead of being truly *awakened*, he is asleep in sin; instead of having *come to himself*, he is beside himself *in the delirium* of pride and self righteousness;—instead of seeking the true God, or having any good disposition towards him, he is manifesting the reigning power of that fleshly mind which is enmity against him;—instead of being now in a *fair way towards heaven*, he is still in the high road to hell,--though perhaps in a different path from what he before walked in.

I know, Sir, that you would not think *all* that

was necessary yet done, while he had only this *infidel* *repentance* ;—perhaps you would take great pains to persuade him of the contrary ; and I shall suppose him to continue still under your training, and really to *believe* what you tell him. Now that he is sufficiently *prepared*, you will call him to *believe in Christ* ;—you will declare to him the gospel, as good tidings for a sinner so *qualified* ;—perhaps you will encourage him much to put his trust now in God's grace and mercy, in the atonement of Christ, and in the aids of his Spirit. I shall suppose you to succeed in this also, and to have him what you will call a rejoicing believer,—possessed (as he is taught to think) of the *spirit of adoption*, and the *spiritual blessings of the Messiah's kingdom*. And supposing all this, I must plainly tell you that he is now—as he was before—in the *delirium of sin*, and false religion, and infidel opposition to God ;—that what he has received as the *Gospel* is not *the GOSPEL* ;—that the Christ in whom he believes is a *false Christ* ;—and that the spirit, which emboldens him in his approaches to the idol God he has set up in his heart is the spirit of antichrist :—and that the joy, with which he is filled, is but the presumptuous elation of false confidence. He worships and is zealous for a God, that is neither *just* nor the *justifier of the ungodly* : he believes in a Saviour, that is not the Saviour of *sinners*—but of the comparatively *righteous* : he talks of grace,—and thinks of the *distinguishing circumstances* in his own favour which have *qualified* him to receive it, and the quantity of *preliminary* work he has done to obtain it :—and however loud he may be in declaring that it is only by the *grace* of God he expects to be saved, the grace that he talks of is no *GRACE* ;—and however full of love he may be to the imaginary Christ that he thinks is suitable to himself,—however explicit, and *sincere* also, in his declarations that he builds on no foundation but that Christ,—he is yet full of enmity against the *true CHRIST*, and building a high tower

of evangelical profession upon the sand. PUBLICANS AND HARLOTS GO INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD BEFORE SUCH.

Of the offensiveness of this testimony I am so well aware, that—were I not convinced of its importance and of its truth—I should be indeed very imprudent in publishing it. Men will bear, with comparative patience, the plainest and sharpest testimony against their sins,—or what they acknowledge to be sins. Here the consciences of many take part with the reprobate; and the pride of more contributes to make him liked and admired. They are fond of hearing the vices of *others* lashed. But a testimony against their fancied *goodness*, and especially against their false RELIGION, the world cannot bear. *You take away their gods which they made, and what have they more?*

But you have not yet done with your attack upon what I have said of *Repentance*. You return to the charge in the next paragraph, and observe—that the Methodists will readily acknowledge that such a sorrow for sin and solicitude about things of salvation, as arise from the terror of an alarmed conscience, “do not *always* imply true repentance.” Let them or you, Sir, plainly say what does imply true repentance, or what is implied in it. Do they not always talk of it in that sense, against which I have protested as *always* coming short of *true repentance*? Do not you—their advocate—expressly maintain that true repentance *precedes* justifying faith and is a *preliminary step* to it? Perhaps you and the Methodists will desire to include in true repentance *more than*—sorrow and solicitude about the things of salvation. What more it is that you mean to include in it, I can only conjecture; as you have chosen to cover your meaning in the metaphorical language of—“coming to ourselves—and awaking from the delirium of a sinful state.” Perhaps you would desire to include in it—a sincere purpose and endeavour to break off our sins. Well, Sir; in-

clude what you will in it, and your repentance will still be spurious,—will still be *infidel repentance*. The sorrow, and solicitude, and purpose, and endeavour, and whatever else you add, will constitute nothing spiritually good: for you maintain that they must take place previous to saving faith;—and I maintain that, whatever changes take place in an unbelieving sinner, leave him—as an unbeliever—yet under the power of the devil, and an enemy of God.

You intimate a wish to make your repentance arise from something else than—“the terror of an alarmed conscience;” but you say not from what else you suppose it to arise,—only that it does not spring from *faith*, to which you say it is a *preliminary step*. Then, Sir, let it arise from what it will, it arises from nothing good; and is no more a *preliminary step* to faith than murder or adultery. You would probably wish to represent it as arising from *love to God*: but you must suppose that an *unbelieving sinner* may be a very good kind of man indeed, if you suppose that he can have any love to the *true God*. “*FAITH worketh by love* :” but the sinner, while yet under the power of unbelief, is uniformly represented in Scripture as a “*hater of God*,”—as not having the love of God in him. The *Gospel* is sent to *such*, as though God did beseech them by the ministers of his word to *be reconciled to him*; declaring his amazing love in “*sending his own Son to be the propitiation for our sins* ;”—testifying the completeness of the *work* which *HE* accomplished on the cross, for taking away sin;—proclaiming that *in HIM the FATHER is WELL PLEASED*, and that *WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH in HIM is accepted in the beloved*, and *has peace with God*. They who *disbelieve* this *Gospel*, continue enemies of God, and dead in sins;—whatever changes of mind, that you may call repentance, take place in them. And in fighting for such *infidel repentance*, as “*preparing them for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s*

kingdom,—you do but encourage them in *unbelief*, and preach to them a *false* repentance and a *false* Messiah.

You proceed to say—that such feelings, of sorrow and solicitude, as spring merely from the terror of an alarmed conscience, may be a *preliminary step to—true repentance*. What! Is the question between us changed? I thought, Sir, you were maintaining some such false repentance—(under the name of *true*)—to be a *preliminary step to FAITH*. ---But now, in place of *faith*, you slip in **TRUE REPENTANCE**: without apprizing your readers at all that you intend to introduce a new question. Am I to conceive that, by this, you mean tacitly to concede the former point; and to acknowledge—what I have asserted—that there is no *true* repentance till we *believe* the Gospel? Or am I to consider it a new topic of controversy; and that, from the question whether there be *true* repentance previous to *faith* and a *preliminary step to faith*, you turn aside to assert that there is a *false* repentance previous to *true* and a *preliminary step to it*.? Indeed, Sir, I would not have expected from you such trifling, upon such an important subject. But I do hope that you will be induced to state, without ambiguity, what you mean by *true* repentance. I have stated what I mean; and if you only come forward as explicitly, I think I shall find an easier task in maintaining my assertions against you. Till you do,---in order to avoid shifting the ground of controversy,—I must suppose that you intend, through the remainder of the paragraph, to argue on the old question—*whether such a sorrow for sin, and solicitude about the things of salvation—or such a repentance* (whatever you please to mean by the word) *as arises merely from the terror of an alarmed conscience, or from something* (whatever you please) *in an unbelieving sinner,—be TRUE REPENTANCE and a PRELIMINARY STEP to saving FAITH*.

Understanding you thus, I find you bring forward

a new argument, to support the affirmative of this question. You derive it from the parable of the Prodigal Son; to which I gladly lend the serious attention you call for; and in which you say there is “a series of *preliminary steps*, all tending to, and all issuing in *one happy conclusion*.” After advertising to “the mouth of unerring wisdom,” from which the statement in this parable proceeded, you gravely ask—whether we can “conceive it right to assert that the prodigal’s *perseverance in his profligacies* would have been equally conducive to *the same happy issue*.” This passage also you distinguish by a note of admiration; intending no doubt to challenge your reader’s wonder,—that I should advance such an assertion: and with many readers it will have the effect desired. Your note of admiration, Sir, may well stand there: for it is wonderful how you could intimate that I conceive it right to assert—that the prodigal’s perseverance in his profligacies would have been conducive to any *happy issue*, or could have issued in any thing but his perishing in a strange land.—Probably we shall agree in considering the state of the prodigal, in that distant land, as illustrative of the condition of a sinner in his state of alienation from God. Now, Sir, have I ever asserted—have I ever intimated, that a sinner can *continue alienated from God, and persevere in his sinful course, without inevitable destruction*? Have I not borne the most explicit testimonies of the contrary? And are they all to be set aside by an insinuation—that I think he may continue in sin, and yet arrive at a *happy issue*?—an insinuation enforced by a mark of wonder annexed to it. And this, only because I maintain against you, and the Methodists, and so many others, that he never is truly turned from his sinful course, or brought out of his state of alienation from God, till he *believe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*.—A man who would argue upon any literary or scientific subject, in such a manner as you argue against me, would

receive an answer—(if he received any)—such as I would be unwilling to offer to you. But when the *religious* systems of men are to be maintained in opposition to the truths of God, there is no sophistry too gross, to pass current in the world for the soundest reasoning.

But in this parable there is—“a series of *preliminary steps* all tending to and all issuing in one *happy conclusion*.” Well, Sir; if these preliminary steps be designedly illustrative of the *unbelieving repentance*, for which you contend as *true repentance* and a preliminary step to *faith*,—and if the happy conclusion in which they issue be designedly illustrative of *faith*, or of believing the *Gospel* :—then the argument which you borrow from the parable will have considerable weight. But if neither one nor the other be the case,—then this argument, which you introduce with so much solemnity, resolves itself into that, which I had occasion to take notice of in my last letter—that, because *some* one thing is a preliminary step to *some* other thing, therefore *repentance is a preliminary step to faith*. I fancy your own good sense must by this time anticipate the answer to your argument. The *happy conclusion* in the parable is this—that the poor wretched prodigal is restored to the enjoyment of all the blessings of a son in his father’s house. Is this, Sir, illustrative of *faith*? Is it not obviously analogous to that enjoyment of blessedness, as the sons of God, which is consequent on *true repentance* and *faith*? And if you choose to call *repentance* and *faith* *preliminary steps* to that enjoyment, far be it from me to contend with you about a favourite expression.

But you seem very desirous of representing the *preliminary steps* in the parable, as illustrative of your *unbelieving repentance*. That they are to be considered as illustrating many circumstances in the *true repentance* of a sinner, I readily acknowledge: but how you find out from the parable that they represent a *repentance* “*preliminary to faith and un-*

connected with it," I am at a loss to conjecture:—unless it be, perhaps, that there is no circumstance mentioned in the parable analogous to the hearing of the Gospel, by which *faith* cometh. And if this be your implied argument—(for in the absence of any explicit reasoning, I am obliged to guess what may have flotted in your mind)—let me remind you, Sir, that in the two parables preceding this—the parable of the lost piece of silver and of the lost sheep—both designed by our Lord, as well as that of the prodigal, to illustrate the rich mercy of our heavenly Father;—in these parables, I say, there is no circumstance illustrative of either repentance or faith. And would you infer from them that a sinner can be saved—without either repentance or faith? you might as well draw that inference from them, as draw the inference you have attempted from the parable of the prodigal.

This parable, Sir, was not designed to illustrate the way, in which *repentance unto life* is produced. Had it been so, it would be easy to conceive the introduction of a circumstance, which should be aptly analogous to the sending of the Gospel, and the calling of a sinner to repentance in his *believing* it. But the parable is complete for the purpose for which it is designed, and you pervert it in wresting it to a purpose for which it was not designed. It was designed to represent—to the crowds of publicans and sinners, who drew nigh to the friend of sinners,—to represent to them the rich mercy of God to the poorest—vilest sinners; and to convey to them that they would find the tenderness of his compassion in meeting any such that turned to him, unspeakably greater than their utmost expectations, in turning to him, could imagine it.

In this design, it was pointed against all the murmuring Pharisees, who "stood afar off"—scorning the glad tidings that were proclaimed to the most *unprepared*, *unqualified*, *scandalous* sinners; while it preached the Gospel to all, without distinction,

who would hear it ; and presented to them at once a picture of the wretched apostacy of a sinner from God, and of the character of God our Saviour, as *waiting to be gracious* and delighting in mercy. And from the parable which thus proclaims his Gospel, you endeavour to extort an inference that a sinner---who *disbelieves* it---may yet have *repentance unto life*,---and by his infidel repentance be “ *prepared* for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom.” You have failed in the attempt : and all such attempts, however plausible their colouring, will be found upon examination to fail. But, pardon me, Sir, for saying that you, as a gentleman of education, versed in the letter of the scriptures, and zealous in supporting their divine authority,---ought rather to have been forward in testifying against that abuse of scripture, which is so lamentably common ; whereby men, interpreting the parables without attention to the leading scope of each, and imagining that all the distinct minutiae of *natural circumstances*, introduced into them were designed to represent some distinct spiritual truths,---endeavour to force each parabolic narrative into an illustration of every scripture doctrine ; and too often, either from the introduction or omission of some natural circumstances in them, derive inferences the most contrary to scripture truth.

Before I conclude this letter, and dismiss for the present that most important subject, which I have discussed in it and in my last :—allow me to make a few observations on a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews ; by which I shall at once mark the wide difference between us, and anticipate an objection that will probably be advanced against me.—The Apostle closes the 4th chapter of that epistle with the following words—“ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy”—(or as it may literally be rendered, *that we may receive mercy*)—“ and find grace to help in time of need.”—It may be asked, does it

not appear from this—that “men are to *do* something in order to their obtaining God’s grace and mercy?” I answer; the direct contrary of what you, Sir, obviously intend by that expression, and have in various passages explicitly asserted—appears from the Apostolic exhortation. The Apostle’s exhortation to *come that we may receive mercy and find grace*—means, what is not only perfectly different from your principle of *doing something in order to our obtaining God’s grace and mercy*,---but is in absolute opposition to it.

You contend that men must do something, previous to their believing in Christ, by which they shall be “prepared for the spiritual blessings of his kingdom:” and therefore when you say that this is to be *done in order to their obtaining God’s grace and mercy*, the words can have no other meaning but this---that the unbelieving work which they do (whatever it consists in) will incline God to extend to them his grace and mercy—or qualify them to be objects of his grace and mercy—or warrant them to come to him with an expectation of receiving grace and mercy. Now, Sir, look at the Apostle’s exhortation; “Let us THEREFORE come boldly unto the throne of grace.”—WHEREFORE? Because we have done a sufficiency of *preliminary* work? Because we have repented so well, and have such poignant sorrow for sin, and such lively solicitude about the things of salvation, that we are sufficiently “*prepared* for the spiritual blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom?” According to the system for which you are an advocate, the exhortation of---*coming boldly to receive grace and mercy*—could be founded on nothing else but this; and the more any sinner complied with the exhortation, the more presumptuously self-confident he must be.

But it is grounded by the Apostle on no such basis; and you have only to observe the connection in which it stands, and in which a parallel exhortation stands (Hebrews x. 22.)—to be convinced that

they are diametrically opposite to your system. The Apostle grounds them both—not on any thing that any sinner has *done* or could do—but on what CHRIST has *done* in taking away sin—and on what HE *is* as the great high-priest over the house of God; ---on the propitiation which HE has made, for the justification of the most ungodly sinner, by the one offering up of himself for sin;—on the way which HE has opened for *sinners* into the holiest, in which “all things are ready,” and by which the poorest ---vilest—most wretched outcast from God is invited to draw nigh to God, and *take of the waters of life freely*,—“without money and without price.”

The Apostolic exhortation is that which—none but the sinner who *believes* the Gospel, on which it is founded, will or can comply with. And the system for which you contend, instead of being countenanced by the Apostle’s exhortation, is no less repugnant with it, than it is with all the scriptures. To represent me as contending for a system according to which a sinner can *remain ungodly* and yet be a partaker of the grace of God,—can enjoy the spiritual blessings of his kingdom *without drawing nigh* to him,—is to misrepresent—not merely what I have asserted—but what the word of God declares; is to raise a cloud of prejudice against the truth, in order to cover an attack upon it.

As little real aid will you find from the numerous scriptures, in which the richest promises are made to those who *fear* the LORD—who *seek* him---who *call* upon him—who *serve* him—who *follow* him, &c. Every one of these is a character, which truly belongs only to the BELIEVER:—and (to repeat the words which so much offended you on the subject of repentance)—*any thing called by these names while we are yet under the power of UNBELIEF, is but a spurious imitation of those heavenly gifts; is but a refined form of that fleshly and selfish mind, which in all its workings is evil—only evil continually: and I would no more be warranted in re-*

presenting any such INFIDEL fearing, or seeking, or praying, or serving, or following—as a PRELIMINARY STEP to FAITH, than in so representing murder and adultery.

It would extend this letter beyond the limits I have assigned to each, to prosecute in it the remainder of your remarks. I must therefore reserve them for a seventh letter;—but think I can promise that in it our present controversy shall be closed.

I remain, Sir,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
Oct. 5. 1803.

POSTSCRIPT.

IF the Reader wish to see exemplified that class of men whom I have described above, let him read almost any of the *popular* religious publications of the day, which go under the name of *evangelical*. But if he wish to be directed to one, in which he will see this false theology exemplified in its most specious and respectable form,—let him read the *CHRISTIAN OBSERVER*,—a periodical work published monthly in London, and conducted by members of the established church. The great object of these gentlemen appears to be to prove themselves *true sons of the church*; and to shew that they do not deserve the opprobrious name of *METHODISTS*, which some how or another has been attached to them.—(The Irish reader may need to be informed that, in England, the word *METHODIST*, has for some years been employed as the name of reproach, by which the world distinguishes

believers of the gospel, or those who are at least supposed to hold the doctrines of grace.)—Calvinists and Arminians have made a common cause of it, and formed a friendly coalition in conducting this work. It would be a very interesting and profitable employment, to examine the religious principles of this and similar publications, which are of very general currency in England: but it would present an awful picture of departure from the Gospel—in a country, which is disposed to boast of the multitudes that profess the Gospel.

The conductors of the **CHRISTIAN OBSERVER** have found out a great many more *preliminary steps*, that put a sinner in a *fair way* for obtaining God's grace, than Mr. Knox contends for—(See No. 15, for March 1803, page 192.)—They speak of the *distinguishing* circumstances of a *hopeful* nature in the case of penitents, who *appear* to have been “peculiarly atrocious offenders” before their repentance: and I dare say they would be at no loss to discover or to conjecture such—in the case of the thief upon the cross. They think that the *smaller* sinners are *much nearer to the kingdom of God* than the *greater*; and the sense in which they employ that expression is clear, from their talking of the *probability* of a man's repentance being diminished *in proportion* to various circumstances of greater sinfulness in him;—of the *degrees* of which it is to be hoped those gentlemen will construct a table. As to “*old offenders*”—they say they “may in general affirm of **THEM**, in the language of scripture, *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots?*”—They have found out that the Pharisees “were probably far *greater sinners* than the Publicans;” and that this was the reason why “the Publicans were *preferred* to the Pharisees by Jesus Christ”

And among the *distinguishing* circumstances, that now render some sinners *much smaller sinners* than others, and therefore more likely to be converted,

and become subjects of—what they call—the grace of God, we find them enumerate their having “an utter detestation of *revolutionary principles*”—their being “strongly prejudiced against *atheism*”—and the being “the son of a CLERGYMAN.” If we could but get all the men in the world to wear *black coats*, and to have the hands of a *Bishop* laid on them --- (I mean no disrespect to the episcopal order)—I suppose the next generation would then stand a fair *chance* of being all converted.—Yet those gentlemen *talk* of *GRACE*; and there is much reason to suspect that *some* of them occasionally *talk* of *ELECTION*,—though for the sake of peace with their *Arminian brethren* they drop that subject in the *CHRISTIAN OBSERVER*; and to make the stronger head against those who presume to call them *Methodists*—agree to say that the articles of the church of England are neither *Calvinistic* nor *Arminian*. And really Dr. KIPLING has been very uncivil in refusing them the right hand of fellowship, and attempting to shew that *none but Arminians* can conscientiously subscribe the articles;—when those gentlemen had found such an accommodating way to screen the reputation of both.—Nor do I wonder that they should be so angry with him upon this subject. But it is to be supposed that he and they will soon understand one another better. For I am sure that the Doctor will not *verbally* deny the doctrines of *Grace*, when couched in scripture-language; and it is too clear that those divines do but *verbally* hold them. About what then are they making so much ado? Ought not the conductors of the *CHRISTIAN OBSERVER* to be the first to address the Dean of Peterborough, in that language—“Let there be no strife between us and thee, for we be *brethren*.”

Indeed although these gentlemen often speak a hard word against *Popery*, yet in this they are very inconsistent with themselves:—for we find them (No. 19—for July 1803—page 412) sanctioning the piety of *popish monks* in the *abbey of La-*

Trappe—as “*genuine* piety:”—speaking of them as having retired from the world “from motives of *penitence* and of *zeal for the glory of God*, feeling in their souls the *divine influence* of *true religion*, and delighting in the service of their Maker.” We find them (page 410) holding out the mode in which these monks pass their life—(chanting hymns to the Virgin, &c.)—as affording “a laudable example to pious Protestants.”—Truly, if these things be so, the REFORMATION was a very foolish matter. It appears that religious protestants can agree with religious papists, in what constitutes *true piety* and *true religion*: and why then should they squabble any longer about matters which cannot be essential to Salvation, as not essential to *true religion*? O! for a second LUTHER, to lash the Popery of false Protestants.

The gentlemen who conduct the CHRISTIAN OBSERVER, if these lines should meet their eye, may perhaps complain that I employ a language of severity against them, which does not coincide with the spirit in which I have aimed at maintaining the general controversy. But I do not think it misplaced severity. An *open* opposer of the truth is to be dealt with much more tenderly than those who contradict and betray it—in the guise of *friends*. From some of those gentlemen, if I mistake not, there was formerly reason to hope better things. Let them “remember from whence they are fallen, and repent.” Let them be less solicitous about their reputation, and more “valiant for the truth.” Let them remember him who hath said—“them that honour me I will honour;” and—henceforth seeking “the honour which cometh from GOD only,”—they will find themselves more than recompenced for the reproach that will be cast on them by men.

LETTER VII.

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succes.

SIR,

YOU express your hope that “ it will be felt by all *candid CALVINISTS*, that on the point of *repentance*,”—I am *not* with them, nor *you* against them. Whether you mean by this, to attribute to such of them—as agree with you on this subject—a monopoly of *candour*, or a monopoly of *Calvinism*,—I am not very solicitous to enquire. For the possession of the former quality I have not, in my obser-
vation, found such persons eminently distinguished; and their title to the name of *Calvinists*, I shall give myself no trouble to dispute. Yet I would briefly observe, as a matter of curiosit, that CALVIN would certainly have disowned them all.

It was mere curiosit that led me just now, before taking up my pen, to brush the dust off one of the volumes of that reformer. I took down his INSTITUTES, and turned to that part where he begins to treat of *repentance*. (l. iii. c. 3) I scarcely thought it credible, that I should find him agreeing with you in sentiment on that subje&t; but I as little expected to find that he expressed himself *clearly* and *decisively* in opposition to you. For could I suppose that you would, in that case, have talked of yourself as—not opposing *any candid Calvinist* on this point? Could I suppose that you would, without any examination, have hazarded the expression of your belief—that “ *all wise and pious Calvinists* have hitherto given” to the scriptures, which you have quoted, a sense that is—in substance the same with yours?—What then was my surprise, when the two following sentences met my eye, before I

had read a page in that part of Calvin's Institutes to which I have referred you?—"That *repentance* "not only immediately follows upon *faith*, but springs "from *faith*, must be admitted as beyond dispute. As "to those who think that *repentance* is rather pre- "vious to *faith*, than that it follows from it, or is "produced by it as its fruit,—they have never known "the real nature of *repentance*, and ground their opi- "nion upon a weak argument indeed."—What was my surprise, in casting my eye forward to find that this very *weak argument*, which Calvin proceeds to mention and to refute, is identically the same which you have borrowed, from misapplied and misinterpreted scriptures, for opposing me?

I closed the book, glad to find that the old Reformer was not so much in the dark on this subject, as many who are now distinguished by his name: but am no more disposed to rest any weight upon his authority being with *me*, than I would have allowed any weight to it, determining the question, if his authority had been decidedly with *you*. I mention it only as a curious matter; and one which may perhaps impress upon you the need of greater caution, when you write for the public. For you perceive, Sir, that—however exclusively *candid* and *wise* and *pious* you suppose the persons who agree with you (in thinking that *Repentance unto life* is a *preliminary step to Faith*)—they certainly are not *Calvinists*—except in name. *That*, I readily admit, is of very little consequence if they be *CHRISTIANS*.—more than in name. When you add therefore, at the close of the paragraph, the following words—"to deny that *repentance* is a *preliminary step to Faith in Christ*, is to contradict the almost unanimous sentiment of *Calvinists*, just as much as of *Arminians*"—I shall make no further use at all of the discovery that no *real Calvinist* adopts the sentiment, which you attribute almost to all. I am too well aware of the infinite importance of the question itself, to be diverted from it to the en-

quiry—what Calvinists or Arminians think about it. I give you the unqualified force of your assertion,—the undiminished weight of their supposed authority in your favour; and I ask you—what then?—What does their authority weigh, in determining *what is truth?* No more, Sir, in my estimation—than a grain of sand. “To the Law and to the Testimony.” While my sentiments are sanctioned by the word of God, I shall not care whose sentiments they contradict.

But you introduce in this paragraph a new argument, which deserves a little more consideration. You say—“ all wise and pious Calvinists have “ always held that when God decrees *Ends*, he ap-“ points suitable *Means*.” Whoever have held it, Sir, it is an indubitable and important truth. You go on—“ and that CONSEQUENTLY where he de-“ termimes to bring an individual to the saving “ knowledge of himself, he gives to him awaken-“ ing and enlightening grace, as *preliminary* to that “ blessing.”—If you intend by *grace* here—the in-fluence of his Spirit; and if by the words “ as pre-liminary to that blessing” you intend—*as the means requisite for that blessing*;—you assert another in-dubitable and important truth. “ Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God.” But the word of God, though the instrumental means by which the end is produced, is wholly ineffectual for the production of that end, (on account of the natural *blindness* and *pride* of man and his carnal *en-mity* to the word of truth)—except where God accom-pañies it with his awakening and enlightening spirit; and so gives his word entrance into the heart, begetting that *belief* or *persuasion* of it, which con-stitutes the *saving knowledge of himself*. In this sense, Sir, the consequence you draw is good, and your assertion is incontrovertible: but in this sense it stands in direct opposition to the inference which you proceed to deduce—“ that Repentance is a *pre-liminary step to faith in Christ.*”

I fully agree with you in calling the knowledge of God—*saving knowledge*. It is an essential part of the work of CHRIST, as the *Servant of JEHOVAH*, “to manifest his name:” and in the person and work of CHRIST it is, that the glory of the only true GOD shines and is discovered to sinners: (2 Cor. iv. 6.) “It is life eternal, to *know* him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.” (John xvii. 3.) The knowledge of the *true* God cannot be separated from the *Belief* of his word, in which he has revealed himself. *Where* he determines to bring an individual to the *saving knowledge of himself*—where he has decreed this *end*,—he employs the appointed *means*. He sends his word of truth (*the sword of the Spirit*)—and his *awakening and enlightening* Spirit with it,—as the only efficient means for communicating that blessing, for producing that faith in Christ—or that *saving knowledge of himself*—which is declared to be “of the operation of God.” Well;—it follows demonstrably that there is no *repentance unto life* previous to *faith*;—because there is no truly awakening or enlightening grace, previous to the communication of this *saving knowledge*. I remain therefore wholly at a loss to conjecture what argument you intend to derive in aid of your opinion—that *repentance* is a preliminary step to *faith*—from the principle that “when God decrees *ends* he appoints suitable *means*:” as I suppose you will scarcely allege that any *infidel repentance* is a suitable means for producing *faith*,—any more than *Murder* or *Adultery*.

You tell me, Sir, that “when tenets of this nature”---(that is, like the tenet of mine which you oppose---*that there is no true repentance previous to faith*)---“were broached in England toward the “conclusion of the seventeenth century, none were “more zealous in opposing them than the *respectable* Calvinists of that day.” And I think it very likely that you are tolerably correct in this assertion: for I am persuaded that none can be known

to hold such tenets, and continue *respectable* Calvinists---respected by the world. There is no surer road to become contemptible in the world. Just in proportion as the gospel of Christ is clearly and faithfully declared, it will irritate and disgust those who believe not the testimony; and its witnesses will appear *base* in their view, and lose all the *respectability*, which they had perhaps before. They are witnesses of a *despised* Saviour; and must lay their account with sharing in the contempt, of which he has ever been an object---especially from the *religious world*.

You tell me of a Mr Richard Davis, who in the year 1692, broached such tenets. I take it upon your authority, that they were such as mine which you oppose: and indeed, from the brief statement you give, it does seem that he intended to assert nothing different from me.—You tell me that, upon this “the united non-conforming ministers in and about London forthwith published—a DECLARATION “solemnly pronouncing such positions to be not only “repugnant to the gospel, but strong temptations to “carnal security and libertinism.” Truly, Sir, it would have been better for them to have tried to *prove* this than to publish a DECLARATION *pronouncing* it—ever so *solemnly*. I make no more of such a declaration, though from “the united non-conforming ministers in and about London,” than I do of—a POPE’s Bull. You have tried to refute such positions; and to prove that they are repugnant to the gospel, and *pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences*. I have proved, from scripture and from reason, that you are mistaken;—that the principles, against which you contend—(while pregnant indeed with offensiveness to unbelieving religionists)—are essentially interwoven with the gospel, and infinitely important in the most salutary consequences to those who believe them. Nor am I at all apprehensive that all the ministers in the united Kingdom, conforming and non-conforming, will

have any more success than you in opposing them. I willingly divide with a contemptible Mr. Richard Davis, of Rothwell in Northamptonshire, advancing positions agreeable to the word of God ;—and look the whole tribe of respectable Calvinists and anti-Calvinists, who contradict them, in the face—with-out either fear or shame.

You begin your next paragraph with the following words—“ When you therefore so strangely put “ murder and adultery on a footing, I might almost “ say, with the prayers and the alms deeds of a “ Cornelius, you certainly are correct in not assum- “ ing the appellation of a Calvinist.”—In my Ex- postulatory Address, I have assigned my reasons for declining to *assume* the appellation of a Calvinist ; while I have explicitly avowed in what sense I am ---what is called a Calvinist. But why do you assert, Sir, that you *might almost say* that I put murder and adultery on a footing with the prayers and alms-deeds of a Cornelius ? You certainly might quite say that I put them on a footing with—that infidel repentance for which you contend ; as being the one, no more than the other, a *preliminary step* to faith, or any *preparation* for the blessings of the Messiah’s kingdom. But you, Sir, greatly err in putting the prayers and alms-deeds of Cornelius on a footing with that infidel repentance.

I read in scripture (Acts x. 4.) that the prayers and alms of Cornelius “ came up for a memorial before God ;”—that he was one who “ feared God and wrought righteousness :” and the whole account given of him marks his character, as that of a *believing* worshipper of the *true* God ; and, though not a Jew by birth nor circumcised, yet—(like the proselytes of the Gate)—acquainted with the revelation which the *Lord* had made of himself in the Jewish scriptures, and a partaker of the *faith* of the *true* Israelites. How, Sir, could his prayer have been heard and accepted by JEHOVAH, if it had been offered to a *false* God ? How could his alms have

been “had in remembrance in the sight of God,” if he were destitute of that *love*—which is at once the fruit and evidence of *faith*? Indeed Sir, you wrong his character, and pervert the Scriptures, when you represent his prayers and alms-deeds as the works of an unbeliever; when you more than intimate that they were little better than *infidel* *repentance*.

“*Sober Calvinists*,” you say, “have most explicitly and solemnly condemned” the system I appear to hold. Well, Sir; among the various reproaches to which the Lord Jesus submitted, that of being *beside himself* was one (Mark iii. 22.); and “the disciple is not above his Master, neither the servant above his Lord.” One of the most honoured of his servants met with the same reproach: (Acts xxvi. 24.) and I know that either the gospel, or the unbelieving world, must be strangely altered since that day,—if his faithful followers can now pass through the world with a high character for *sobriety* and *respectability*. I claim no prejudice however in favour of my system, from its having been condemned by *sober Calvinists*: but on the other hand their most explicit and *solemn condemnation* of it, unsupported by any refutation of it from scripture or from reason, ought not to constitute any prejudice against my system.—You add, Sir—that I “seem still more directly and personally to have condemned” those *sober Calvinists*; and you quote an assertion of mine, as “appearing to apply to them,”—the truth or falsehood of which must be determined by a very different criterion, from that which you would try it by.

The assertion occurs in my Address, and is this
 ...“that there is a greater difference between the
 “way of a sinner’s justification and salvation which
 “the gospel reveals, and the most refined form of
 “false religion which *seems* most like it, than there
 “is between the latter and any the most avowedly
 “infidel system.” You make a very solemn pre-

paration, Sir, for combating this assertion. You aver that *nothing is further from your purpose than to put any force on my expression*. "But"—you add—"there is an *Emphasis* and studied *decisiveness* of manner in this denunciation, which it is impossible to overlook." I am glad of it, Sir; and I would that the denunciation (as you call it) might arrest the attention of all, as it arrested yours. For you are very much mistaken in expressing a *hope*—that *my zeal for my particular notions did, at the moment I penned that sentence, very much outrun my own sober persuasion*, and that I was not deliberately in earnest. Believe me, Sir, I was; and am deliberately in earnest in maintaining that assertion, which has so much shocked you.

You ask me—*whom do I not condemn*, if I were deliberately in earnest? Do you then admit, Sir, that vast multitudes in Christendom adopt at most "a refined form of *false religion*" which only *seems* like that which the gospel reveals? I verily believe it: but their multitude, while it renders the assertion I have advanced about their false religion very offensive, calls aloud for a serious examination of it, and cannot determine either its truth or falsehood. When you say that "St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, and the Saviour of the world himself—would come within the broad circumference of my *Anathema*," and distinguish this sentence by another note of admiration,—you say what is very shocking indeed; but I am sure did not intend to convey the meaning which I shrink from expressing, but which your words would necessarily bear—if admitted as an argument against my assertion. As to the "inferior names—the *celebrated* Calvinists, both English and foreign," with whose suffrages you say you "might fill pages,"—I shrink not at all from saying of them, however *celebrated*, that any of them who adopted the most refined form of *false religion*, which seems most like the gospel, differed less in their system from the most avowed

infidels, than they differed from real Christians. You say—if you are to understand the words of my assertion, according to their obvious meaning, you “must think they amount to”—Nay, Sir; if you please—we must not for a time be diverted from the words in which I have couched my own assertion, to the words into which you choose to translate it.—I shall come to *them* by and by. But you admit that the meaning of my words is *obvious*; nay that there is “an Emphasis and studied decisiveness of manner” in them: and in this, indeed, there is only what I aimed at giving them; for I well knew how offensive and how important my assertion was. Allow me then to dwell upon it a little longer.

There is a greater difference between the way of a sinner's justification and salvation which the gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which seems most like it; than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.—I take it for granted, Sir, that you admit that the gospel reveals the *true* way of a sinner's justification and salvation. And admitting this to be the case, the logical truth of my assertion, which has so much offended you, is beyond all controversy. In that case, every system of religion—which proposes any *other* way of a sinner's justification and salvation—must be a system of *false* religion: and the most refined form of it, which *seems* most like the religion of the gospel, but is *not* the religion of the gospel, must necessarily differ more from it, than it does from any other system—that is also false and different from the religion of the gospel. The resemblance of the most refined form of false religion to that of the gospel—is only a *seeming resemblance*; but its agreement with the grossest form of false religion—is a *real agreement*, in that both are false—both different from the true religion of the gospel. An illustration may render my meaning plain. There is a greater difference between a real human body and the finest statue of marble, that *seems* *very* *like* it.

---than there is between the latter and the rudest rock.

But from the logical truth of my assertion, I gladly pass to the consideration of its importance. If any of these refined forms of false religion, which propose a way of a sinner's justification and salvation different from that which the gospel reveals will answer the important purposes of religion as well, or nearly as well ;—if in short a sinner, who continues to adopt it, can be justified and saved in it ;—then, Sir, I readily admit, that my assertion, however true, is of no essential importance. And then —I as readily admit that my controversy with you is very unimportant ; and all controversy indeed between any of those religious systems, which will *alike* answer the purposes of salvation. But upon this supposition also, it would be very important to ascertain the *common* character of those religious systems, which will alike conduct their respective votaries to eternal happiness : in order that those who adopt them may lay aside unprofitable controversies with one another, and all unite in maintaining and contending for that which is essential to salvation.

But till you, Sir, or some one else, will come forward to do this,—I must maintain from the word of God that there is *no other way*, in which a sinner can be justified and saved, than that which the gospel reveals ; and that every religious system which proposes any other way—different from that which the gospel reveals, however nearly resembling it in appearance,—is not only essentially distinct from the religion of the Gospel, —is not only a *false* religion, but will as infallibly lead those who adopt it to eternal ruin, as any the most avowedly infidel system. The one may better answer the purposes of politicians than the other ; and may be more subservient to the interests of human society in the present world. In

differed less in

this respect, there is certainly a very great difference between different systems of false religion. But, as affecting our state and character in the sight of God ---as connected with the eternal salvation of our souls---(in which view alone I am considering them) ---there is no difference between them. They all alike fail of conducting to that end ; they all alike leave the sinner under condemnation ; they all alike issue in eternal death : while the gospel reveals that way of a sinner's justification and salvation, which infallibly conducts every one who believes the Gospel to eternal happiness.—In this respect therefore, “there is a greater difference between the religion of the Gospel and the most refined form of false religion, which *seems* most like it, than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.”

I know the violent outcry which the world raises, against the *illiberality* of the assertion that I maintain ; but it is the outcry of infidelity. If the one and only true God has indeed revealed in his word the way of salvation, we may *a priori* conclude it to be impossible—that those who unbelievingly reject the revelation he has made, should be saved in any other way. It is at once absurd and impious, to suppose that the Bible is the word of God, declaring to us from Him, the way of salvation ; and at the same time that it is not of essential importance to believe what it declares.—The idea is dishonourable to the authority of God, is inconsistent with his glory, and can be maintained only by men who say in their hearts—that he is even such a one as themselves. It is therefore one of the numberless internal characters of divine truth and authenticity which the Bible exhibits to the enlightened observer, that it demands the credence of our minds with that *authoritative* declaration—“ Whoso believeth not shall be damned ;”—that it disdains to accommodate what it reveals to the infidel liberality of men, by giving them to understand that they may disbelieve it with-

out perishing. And it is one of the internal characters of falsehood in various religious systems, which are at this time current in Christendom,—that they propose their respective creeds as matters, which men may accept or reject consistently with salvation. *Such* a creed cannot, without an insult on the divine majesty, be supposed to be founded in a revelation from **God**.

Let me not be understood to say—that every religious system must be from **God**, which bears that mark of authenticity which I have mentioned. I only assert that those which are destitute of it—*cannot* be from **God**. But I know that this essential character of a really divine revelation has been affixed by men to some of their falsest systems. The hierarchy of papal Rome, for instance, blasphemously demands submission to its most anti-christian lies, under the same sanctions which **JEHOVAH** has affixed to his revealed truth. Arrogating to itself divine authority, it acts in this but a consistent part; and acts but wisely, in refusing to have its tenets tried by the word of **God**, and in deterring * its infatuated followers from searching that word. Nor has this usurpation of the sanctions of the **Gospel** been confined to the papal see; though it is perhaps there alone, that they are usurped for the purpose of imposing opinions directly *opposite* to the **Gospel**. But there have been and are **Protestants**, who presumptuously apply them for enforcing tenets—*distinct* from that **Gospel** of our salvation, to which

* I say this, because it is a *fundamental principle* of **Popery** to do so; and a principle ever acted upon, as far as it *can* be enforced. Those who think that **popery** is altered, and has become something less formidable or less false than it was of old, only betray their total ignorance of the essential characters of that system.—I speak not of the private character or sentiments of its individual professors; nor is it very long since they were reminded by one of their own prelates in this country, that it is not by their private sentiments the tenets of the church are to be ascertained; and that those tenets—*cannot alter*.

alone they belong. To that, and to that alone, will it be found that God himself has annexed the authoritative declaration—"who so believeth shall be saved and who so believeth not shall be damned." And this declaration, I repeat it, establishes at once the truth and the importance of my assertion—that *there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner's justification and salvation, which the Gospel reveals—(for that is what the Gospel reveals)—and the most refined form of false religion which seems most like it, than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.*

Allow me, Sir, to prove the truth and importance of that assertion, from another circumstance.—As the religion of the Gospel is the *only true* and the *only saving* religion, so it is that which alone has for its object the *true God*. And the man who—disbelieving the Gospel—adopts the most refined form of false religion that seems most like it, worships and serves a *false god*—the idol of his own infidel imagination. In his word—the *only true God* has made known his name, or character. To *manifest his name unto those who were given him out of the world*, is one of the declared purposes for which the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world: and in the knowledge of that name *eternal life* is declared to consist. (John xvii. 3. 6.) The real character and perfections of Jehovah are displayed in the way of a sinner's justification and salvation, which the gospel reveals; and they who believe that gospel have the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—They *know the name of JEHOVAH* and they alone, (2 Cor. iv. 4. 6.) The minds of all *who believe not*—remain blinded: and denying Him "the only true God," whatever religion they adopt, and however zealous they may be in it,—they worship they know not what—false Gods that cannot profit nor deliver them. Nor is it their calling themselves Christians, nor their giving the *verbal titles* of the true God to their false

objects of worship, that can exempt them from the application of those words of the Psalmist—“ *ALL the Gods of the nations are idols.*” (Psal. xcvi. 5.)

I know how fashionable it is to represent the Pagans themselves—at least the wiser and more pious of them—as worshipping the same God with Christians; only under different names, and with a less clear discovery of his nature and of his will. I know how much the world admires the *liberality* of that sentiment, that He has been—

—In every age,
In every clime adored;
By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage;
JEHOVAH—Jove—or LORD.

So rhymes Alexander Pope,—whose infidel verses are commonly lisped by our children, and sung in some places of so-called christian worship. But what saith the word of God?—*The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to Devils, and not to God.* (1 Cor. x. 20.) “ Confounded shall they all be, that serve graven images; that boast themselves of idols.” (Psal. xcvi. 7.) “ They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” (Psal. cxxxvi. 18.) “ They shall be ashamed and confounded all of them; they shall go to confusion together, that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the LORD, with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” (Isa. xlv. 16, 17.)

Nor let it be urged that professing *Christians*, whatever notions they form of the Deity, do not in general make to themselves visible representations of him with their hands, as the Pagans did.—We know that *all* the pagans did not so;—yet *ALL their gods* are declared to be *idols*. And as to such visible representations—the work of mens hands, they are declared in Scripture to be *in themselves* “ nothing in the world” (1 Cor. viii. 4. x. 19.)—no-

thing but wood or stone. Their great evil consisted in their being—expressions of the false and unworthy *notions* of God, which their worshippers had formed in their minds: and therefore we read of those “whose heart departed from the Lord”--- who *set up their idols in their HEART*—and *separate themselves from JEHOVAH* (Jer. xvii. 50. Ezek. xiv. 4.—7.)—even while they profess to be worshippers of Him. And *such a departing from the living God* there is, wherever there is *an evil heart of UNBELIEF.* (Heb. iii. 12. 1 John v. 20, 21.)

Such as the notion or idea is, which we form of GOD—such is our God: and all who form false notions of Him, as all do who reject the revelation he has made of himself in his Gospel, are worshippers of false gods,—and in the worst sense of the word--- worshippers of *idols*—the work, if not of their hands, yet of their as vain imaginations. Nor will a believer observing the various religious systems of Christendom, perceive at this day less reason for that charge, than when it was of old recorded against a professing people—*according to the number of thy cities, are thy gods.* (Jer. ii. 28. xi. 13.). And as the idolatry of those in Christendom, who disbelieve the Gospel, is persisted in against a clearer and fuller discovery of the *true God*, than was afforded of old either to the Pagans or the Jews,---so much proportionably greater will be their condemnation. *It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment than for such.* And the ground of their condemnation will be—not any innocent error of judgment—but this, that they have “not liked to retain God in their knowledge” ---“because they have not received the *love* of the TRUTH that they might be saved”—but “have changed the truth of God into a lie,” and are righteously left under “strong delusion that they should believe a lie.” (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. Rom. i. 25. 28.)

But perhaps, Sir, you will demand—"what is that falsehood in the notions that any professing *Christians* form of **God**, which can authorize you to place them on a level with *idolaters* of the heathens? I answer the question:—all professing Christians, who *disbelieve* the Gospel of the Grace of God, and look for justification and salvation in any way *different* from that which his Gospel reveals,—must necessarily represent to themselves a **God** neither merciful, nor righteous, nor true: and these are among the essential perfections of **JEHOVAH**,—as essential as his eternity, omniscience, ubiquity, and omnipotence. The latter characters of God many of the more Philosophic Heathens acknowledged; and indeed they are so abundantly testified by the works of creation, that they force themselves more or less upon the acknowledgment of all— even those to whom his word has never come. But it is in his *word*, that the former characters are declared; and by his word *alone*, that they all can be discovered. For without the revelation that he has there made, it could not have entered into the heart of any creature to conceive—how *all* these attributes could be *consistently* exercised. Allow Him to be perfectly *righteous* and immutably *true*; and the *guilty* creature appears to be without hope. Allow the guilty creature—the sinner—to have *hope* of escaping the just recompence of sin;—and it appears to be impossible that **God** should be *true* to his denunciations against sin, and *righteous* to inflict its full penalty. But in the **GOSPEL** of **GOD** our **SAVIOUR**, "in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and into the things of which "angels desire to look,"—in IT—*mercy* and *truth* appear meeting together, *righteousness* and *peace* embracing each other. In it—**GOD** is made known as at once *just*, and the *justifier* of him who believeth in **Jesus**. (Rom iii. 26.) His law is magnified, and the exceeding sinfulness of every transgression against it is exhibited—in the very way in which

the chief of sinners is made a partaker of eternal life.

The man who really *believes* the Gospel of GOD our SAVIOUR, is brought to the knowledge of the *true* GOD ; and knows that “ justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne,” while “ mercy and truth shall go before his face ” (Psal. lxxxix. 14.) The man who *disbelieves* this Gospel, may be very *religious* ; but a *false god* is the object of his religion ; a god neither merciful, nor righteous, nor true. He may talk much of what he calls the divine *mercy*, and may borrow many arguments from it against the Gospel. But what he calls *mercy*, is always something which stands in opposition to perfect *righteousness* and immutable *truth* ;—some indulgence of what is evil,—some forbearance to execute the penalty which the law of God pronounces against sin. Such an attribute belongs not to JEHOVAH. Unbelievers vainly boast of entertaining higher ideas of GOD’s *mercy*, than those whom they oppose. They altogether deny his *real mercy*, which is indeed higher than the heavens, but—in its highest displays—harmonizes with the most awful sanctions of his law.

In their opposition to the glorious gospel, the true character of *unbelieving religionists* is detected ; and is proved to be that of *haters of God*. The pride of their souls spurns at his *mercy* ; the ungodliness of their rebellious minds arraigns his *justice*, as tyrannical severity ; the infidelity of their self-deceiving hearts denies his *truth*, and treats the denunciations of his law as unmeaning threats, which are not to be executed. In their zeal for their *false gods*, they often fear not to blaspheme the GOD of Heaven ; and rather than be saved by Him, in the way which exhibits all his glories, they will choose destruction.—If any think this picture overcharged, let them read the Letter of the ULSIER HERDMAN --(which will shortly call for a reply from me, if

life be spared)—or the controversial writings of Mr. FLETCHER.

I have thus, Sir, assigned two proofs, in confirmation of the assertion that so much shocked you ;--- that *there is a greater difference between the way of a sinner's justification and salvation which the Gospel reveals, and the most refined form of false religion which seems most like it, than there is between the latter and any the most avowedly infidel system.* I have shewn—that the GOSPEL reveals the *only* way of a sinner's justification and salvation, and that every religious system—(from the most refined to the most gross)—which proposes any *other* way, leads to destruction. I have shewn that the GOSPEL reveals the *only true God* ; and that of every other religious system—(from the most refined to the most gross)—a *false god* is the object.—Those proofs of my assertion are not likely to lessen its offensiveness ; though they really confirm its truth and its importance.

But it is remarkable that, in my Expostulatory Address, the assertion against which you exclaim is immediately followed by a proof, of which you take no manner of notice. I there observe—that the systems of the most professed infidel and the most zealous religionist, who disbelieves the Gospel, both “go upon this principle,—that a sinner must “obtain justification in the sight of God by some-“thing that he is to do.”—I observe that “they “only differ with respect to the *degree* and *quant-ty* of the work, which is to be done in order to “acceptance with God and eternal life :”—whereas “the Gospel stands removed from and opposed to “all such systems ; its language being—**BELIEVE “on the LORD JESUS CHRIST and thou shalt be sa-“ved.”** Now, Sir, if these things be so—the truth of my assertion is placed beyond all controversy : and you, or the person who shall next combat it, had better forbear exclaiming against the assertion, till you overthrow the foundation on which it rests ;

---namely this—that IN THE GOSPEL, RIGHTEOUSNESS AND ETERNAL LIFE ARE REVEALED AS THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, WITHOUT CONDITION OR EXCEPTION, WHO BELIEVES THE DIVINE RECORD CONCERNING THE SON OF GOD. In fact, Sir, in this simple principle the whole of my controversy with the Methodists and with you is concentrated; and I point it out, in order that it may not be lost sight of in the various trains of reasoning, in which your opposition to it and their's have necessarily engaged me.

But I now proceed to make a few observations on the method, in which you meet that offensive assertion, which you quote from my Address. Though you acknowledge that its meaning is *obvious*, you translate it into your own words; and observe that you must think it “amounts to this—that *whoever* “*do not hold* with me that *justification is* in every “*sense unconditional*—and that the most poignant “*sorrow for sin, or the most solicitous anxiety about* “*the things of salvation that can precede it, are no* “*more preliminary steps to it, than Murder and* “*Adultery—however such Christians may agree* “*with me in all other respects—they are no better* “*than the grossest and most audacious infidels.*”— Such, Sir, is your interpretation of my assertion: and I do not think you misunderstood it; although your expressions are certainly calculated both to involve my assertion in obscurity, and to lead our readers to a misconception of its meaning.

As the assertion stands, in my Address, altogether unconnected with the question, which you have inaccurately introduced into your interpretation of it, relative to the nature of repentance—(whether it consist in any sorrow or solicitude previous to *faith*) ---and as I have already discussed that question at large in its proper place; you must excuse me if I here disentangle your statement of my meaning, by laying aside that topic, and reducing your interpre-

tation of my assertion to this—"that *whoever do not hold with me that justification is in every sense unconditional*, they are no better than the grossest and most audacious infidels."

But even here, there remain two ambiguities or indeed inaccuracies, which perplex the *obvious* meaning of my own words; and must be adverted to, before I can safely accept your statement. Where have I said, Sir, that justification is **IN EVERY SENSE unconditional**? I have throughout maintained—that *without faith* there is no justification for any sinner: and you are aware that, *in that sense*, many have spoken of faith as a *condition* of justification; though I will never adopt their language, because it is so likely to be understood in a different and most unscriptural sense. But in that sense—of what Logicians call *a causa sine qua non*—you know that I would not deny that faith is a *condition* of justification; but on the contrary maintain it with a decisiveness, which has occasioned many of your castigatory remarks. Why then, Sir, should you—in professing to interpret my meaning—represent me as holding that "justification is *in every sense* unconditional?"

But again, at the close of your statement, you represent me as asserting that such and such persons are—"no better than the grossest and most audacious infidels." Now, Sir, in the assertion which you profess to interpret, I expressly compare *systems* of religion, and not the *characters* of their professors. Nor did I even say that the one *system* was *no better* than the other—(for in many respects it may have a more beneficial tendency)—but I said that the difference between it and the other was *less*, than the difference between it and the *Gospel*. As to the characters of different men who *disbelieve* the *GOSPEL*,—if you speak of their characters and state in the sight of *GOD*, I willingly accept your statement. But when you represent me as asserting that such and such persons—"are *no better* than the

grossest and most audacious infidels"—your words would probably be understood in a sense, which I never intended to convey. I am well aware that many religionists, whom I cannot admit to be Christians—except in name, are in one sense *much better* than any gross and audacious infidel ;—that they are often very amiable, very respectable, and very useful in civil society. And *these* distinguishing characters I am very far from undervaluing, or from not thinking it my duty to acknowledge where I meet them: though I know that they may exist, altogether distinct from what constitutes a CHRISTIAN, or is accompanied with Salvation ; and I think it also my duty to warn their most eminent possessors—(however it may offend them)—in the words of that divine declaration—" that which is "*highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.*" Luke xvi. 15.

And now, Sir, having extricated my assertion from the embarrassment and ambiguity, in which your interpretation involved it,—the assertion itself remains with a sufficiently *obvious meaning*; only that your words—" *whoever do not hold with you,*" &c. imply a *petitio principii*, which I must be excused from admitting,—namely that the principles for which I contend, as essential to the Gospel, are *peculiar tenets of my own*, and either not true, or---(according to the word of God)—not essential to the Gospel. And what do you oppose to my assertion? Why, nothing—but the question—*whom do I not condemn?*

Far be it ever from me to usurp the prerogative of GOD in *condemning* any! But if you mean by the question—‘ *Who believes the Gospel which you assert, and to the belief of which you assert salvation is annexed?*’ I answer—a few despised but happy followers—of a despised but glorious Saviour;---who can look without dismay at the long list of *candid, wise, pious, respectable, sober and celebrated Calvinists*, whom you enumerate as “ *maintaining*

explicitly and zealously the most opposite doctrine ;” ---a few, who are and ever have been unacknowledged by the world, but are “ not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”—because they know that “ it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Rom. i. 16.)

This view of the real church of Christ as “ a little flock”—“ a remnant according to the election of grace”—is one part of the *offence of the cross*, which has not ceased. It cuts off all hope of combining worldly interest and respectability, with the Christian character. But are we, Sir, to estimate the nature of real Christianity by the Bible ; or -- by considering what system, under the name of Christianity, will comprehend the greatest *numbers* ? If by the former, to it I have appealed. If by the latter, we must lay aside our Bibles altogether ; and in order not to be *illiberal*, must lay aside from our system almost every principle—not only of religion ---but of morality. For is it not, Sir, a melancholy fact, that a majority of those who bear the name of Christians in this country—(to go to no other part of Christendom)—are living in the habitually-indulged breach of some one *moral* duty or another. Collect from the mass of our country-men all the swearers, the drunkards, the liars, the fornicators, the dishonest, the covetous, the murderers, and such like ;---and alas ! what an awful multitude would you collect !

I know, Sir, that you would not be an advocate for that system, which would represent *these* as real Christians : but may they not charge you with “ the sharp censure and the gloomy dogma,” which you impute to me ; and as reasonably urge your own question upon yourself—*whom do you not condemn* ? You would answer them from the Bible---(for to that we must after all recur)—and would be at no loss to vindicate yourself from the word of God, against the imputation of *illiberality* and uncharitable judgment. Conceive the answer that you

would give them ; and you will find it a suitable and sufficient answer from me to you.

I know that it is only the *religious world* you would desire to comprehend within your system ; and only that part of it, which combines conscientious *morality* with what is called *heart-religion*. But observe, Sir, that even this will be much the smaller part of the world ; and that the majority will naturally consider—as a very “gloomy dogma” ---the sentiment, that represents them in the broad road to eternal death. Whether you would mean to comprehend all of that description in the *religious world*. I am uncertain ; for you have given me no sufficient clue to discover your precise meaning. If you would,—there must be included in it a great number of *very pious* and *moral* Jews, Musselmen and Pagans,—as well as of Papists, Socinians, Arians, Pelagians, Arminians and Baxterians. For undoubtedly it would be illiberal and untrue, to deny that there are—among all these classes—many who are eminent for *heart-religion* and strict *morality*. And if such of all these classes, be really in a state of acceptance with God, and in the way to eternal life,—then undoubtedly it is quite unessential what our creed is,—what we *believe*. And then, Sir,---pardon me for plainly saying—the Bible, which expressly attaches salvation to *faith* and condemnation to *unbelief*, not only must be a very strange and useless book, but cannot be true. And indeed I have heard very grave and reverend gentlemen, in this Christian country, honestly declare—when pressed on this subject—that they would rather give up the Bible, then admit such a “gloomy dogma,” as appears to follow from it. You, Sir,—I know--- have greater reverence for the Bible than this. You must therefore necessarily *narrow* your system still more ; and be exposed to the charge of *illiberality and uncharitableness* from a still greater number.

I now suppose that you will aim at comprehend

ing in it,—only those of the religious world, who have *true religion*. There we are agreed:—and it only remains to settle the standard of true religion. This is indeed an important enquiry; and its importance is sufficient to vindicate all the pains, that I have taken in my controversy with you, from the imputation—by which so many aim at smothering it ---as if it were unprofitable and unimportant. I have stated what I conceive to be included in *true religion*; and I have stated that I acknowledge the Bible, as the word of GOD, to be the only standard of it. You have not yet stated what you include in *true religion*; and have argued throughout, as if you adopted a very different standard for determining it. You appear to have taken it for granted that such and such men or bodies of men—(celebrated, respectable, wise, pious, &c. &c.)—had true religion: and then, observing that they held such and such tenets, you seem to infer that opposite tenets are therefore not to be included in true religion. But the whole of this reasoning—(and the greater part of your letter is occupied with it)—falls harmless to the ground. A sensible child may see that it begs the question, and merely appeals to human prejudice and authority. For *if* any creed be essential to true Religion, those who disbelieve that creed, have not true Religion—however celebrated they be, or respectable, or wise, or pious, &c. &c. If *no* creed be essential to true religion, then—as before—we must give up the Bible altogether; and the question recurs—what constitutes true religion? and by what is it to be estimated? If by the celebrity, wisdom, piety, &c. of religious professors,---then be assured, Sir, the Jews, Turks, Pagans, Socinians, &c. will be able to produce you characters as celebrated among them for *wisdom* and *piety*---as any of those, whose authority you produce against me.

But I am persuaded, Sir, that although your mode of reasoning *implies* the reverse, yet you will

ultimately agree with me in maintaining that the word of GOD is the one and only criterion, by which we are to determine what *true religion* consists in. —And now I have hitherto principally considered the *truths* which it reveals, as essential to be *believed*; and you appear shocked at the consideration of the very small number, who according to this standard will be found possessed of true religion; and you urge this circumstance as decisive against me. But you must by this time perceive, that this circumstance cannot be admitted as decisive against me, without being equally decisive against your own system,—whatever it be;—nor indeed without changing the standard of Religious truth altogether. But I shall own to you, that—still adhering to the Bible for my standard of true Religion, of true Christianity,---I cannot estimate the proportion of real Christians in this country at a higher number, when I look at the *practice* of professors, than when I look at their various creeds? Nay, there are several, with whose creeds I am not sufficiently acquainted to discover any falsehood in them,—and perhaps if I were acquainted with them, I should be unable to point out any falsehood in the creeds that they *profess*;—but whose *practice* affords an awful evidence against the pretensions they make to believing the Gospel.

They may *say* that they have faith; but their works disprove what they say. (James ii. 14—20. 1 John i. 6.) Very few *profess* Christian faith; and of the few who profess it, or do not openly profess what contradicts it, too many appear to *walk after the flesh*; and so manifest that they are not partakers of that precious gift. Floating notions or opinions about detached doctrines of the Bible they may have received from men; and may be very zealous for them,—often as the chief thing on which they rest their claim to the Christian character. But I know from the Bible that, if they *really believed* the glorious Gospel of the grace of God—with that

discovery and persuasion of it which his spirit gives, ---it would bring forth other fruit in them than what they produce; (Col. i. 6.) It would turn them to the Lord, in a willing subjection of heart and life—not to the traditions of men—but to the precepts of his word. It would crucify them to the world. It would make them gladly take up the cross, deny themselves, and follow a despised Saviour through a despising world—as those who were not of it. It would knit their hearts together in brotherly love to his despised followers; whom these false professors are now sometimes the first to calumniate and reproach. Yes, it would produce love—*not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth*; love, manifested in self-denying acts of brotherly kindness and sympathy;—love, “without partiality and without hypocrisy;”—love the closeness of which the unbelieving world knows nothing of.

And when I look at the things that are substituted in the religious world, for these fruits of the spirit,—a quantity of religious talk, and a multiplicity of religious meetings, and attachment to religious leaders,—with perhaps a grave deportment, gloomy looks, and some peculiarities of dress or forms or phraseology;—surely they seem to have laid aside the Bible, not more as the standard of *Christian faith*, than as the standard of *Christian practice*. Ah! Sir, if the Bible be true, the flock of Christ is a *little flock* indeed: and it is mischievous nonsense to try to conceal this, for fear of offending the world. They will undoubtedly think our testimony uncharitable and illiberal;—they will mistake it;—they will attribute it to a thousand false and unworthy motives,—to pride and censoriousness, and an overweening conceit of ourselves. But shall Christians therefore betray the truths of God, and deal with real uncharitableness to the souls of their fellow sinners,—in order to please them,—to conciliate their favour and esteem? Nay; let the witnesses of Christ follow the example of one of

old, and by the manifestation of the truth—(not by disquising or corrupting it)—commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God ;—and then they will have, with him, the testimony of their own conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world. (2 Cor. i. 12. iv. 2.)

And here, Sir, permit me to take notice of a deistical objection against Christianity, which the subject I have been last considering naturally suggests ;—an objection which I have often heard stated from the Pulpit, and to which I have commonly heard answers proposed—that were little less deistical than the objection, which they were brought to remove. I mean—the want of *universality* in the promulgation of the Gospel. ‘ If the Christian religion,’ they say, ‘ be indeed of God, and so important as is represented, why has not the Almighty sent the Scriptures to all nations of the Earth, and in all ages of the World?’ The objection,—like all objections made by men against the truths or dealings of God,—betrays at once the folly and the wickedness of those who make it. It goes upon the supposition that men, however fallible and frail—(according to the phraseology of the *vindicators of human nature*)—are yet so well-disposed, that they only need to be shewn what is good and true in order to embrace it. And the falsehood of this supposition is not only declared in the Scriptures, but proved by those very objectors,—whose conduct fulfils the scriptures which they reject. Do those, to whom the word of God has come, and who reject it—amidst the multiplied evidences (internal and external) of its truth which surround them,—do they object against the divine procedure, in not sending it to others that they may reject it too,—and so may perish under aggravated condemnation? The total wickedness of human nature, in all men, is evinced by their *disbelief* of the GOSPEL, where it is sent ;—by this,

above all other evidences of it. They are proved by this “ to love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” And those objectors afford the most decisive answer to their own objection ; and put it beyond controversy, that what they proudly challenge the Almighty to send to all as a blessing, is—both that which no man can have any *right* to demand,—and that which, if only sent to all as they desire, would be perverted by the sinful rejection of all into an accumulated curse.

If they change the form of their objection, and demand—‘ why does He not only send his Gospel to all, but—where he sends it—accompany it with his Almighty Spirit, discovering to all men its excellency and convincing them of its truth?’—it is in this form an objection which the Arminians have long adopted into their system ; and by adopting it, prove their relationship to the Deists. And the question now resolves itself into this—‘ Why am I so wicked?—*Why hath he made me thus?*’ It is a question, by which the sinner arrogantly arraigns JEHOVAH at his bar ; and at the very moment that he exhibits the strongest evidence that his wickedness is *wilful*—blasphemously attempts to transfer the blame of it to his Creator. It is a question, in which all the presumption and mad rebelliousness of the human heart appear concentrated ; and to which the fittest answer is that given to it of old by the Apostle—“ Nay—but, O man, who art thou that repliest against GOD?”—Well may a believer say with the Psalmist—“ horror hath taken hold on me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law :—and, while he remembers what it is that maketh him to differ, well may he rejoice that “ salvation belongeth unto the LORD,” and is the work of his rich mercy and his sovereign power. For he must see that he himself *could* have no hope,—but for that “ good hope through GRACE,” which the Gospel reveals.

You bring forward, Sir, against me—a quotation,

which you "select out of eighty," taken by Richard Baxter "from the authorised annotations written by Divines of the Westminster assembly;" and you bring it forward, to prove "the sentiments of English Calvinists" to be opposite to mine. That gives me very little trouble, if it be even so: and I think it likely that any so-called Calvinists, from whose sentiments Richard Baxter could derive support to his system, entertained sentiments very opposite indeed to mine, or to the Gospel. As far as I am acquainted with Richard Baxter's system, I suspect that it was one of those "refined forms of false religion," which may *seem* very like the Gospel,—but is as contrary to it as darkness to light. I am aware, Sir, how Richard Baxter has been canonized. I am aware that, when his name appears in print, the epithets of *holy*—*pious*, &c. are commonly prefixed to it. If he believed the Gospel, he was holy indeed; but of that we have no other evidence, but what his sentiments recorded in his works afford. Of them I have four folio volumes; but they do not happen to contain that piece of his, to which you refer. It is little matter. And as to his quotation from these same *authorised Annotations*, I need take little notice of it. I know how a detached quotation, separated from the context, may be employed to support a very different sentiment from what the writer ever intended. The words which he quotes are—some of them—of a very questionable tendency indeed. But if the writers only intended by them—that the prayers and services of sinners can have no acceptance with God, while they are themselves yet the servants of sin,—they intended to convey, only what I have very explicitly asserted. If they intended to convey,—that there is any way, in which sinners can be truly *cleansed* from their sins, but in that "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," by the Redeemer's obedience unto death, and through the faith of the Gospel which proclaims his word;—they intended to convey what is false,

and what does not become a whit less false—for being asserted by “Divines of the Westminster Assembly”

But as “a still more direct proof of what the whole body of the English Calvinists at that time held,” you produce a quotation “from the assembly’s own confession of faith;”—in which they state that—*repentance is of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it.* This would be a very harmless quotation, but for what is implied in it,—an insinuation that I think sinners *may expect pardon without Repentance*;—and this insinuation, confirmed by the appeal which you immediately subjoin to the quotation—whether I “must not deem this to be precisely and literally a *refined form of false religion, although most like the true.*” No, indeed, Sir, On the contrary, it would be a very gross form of false religion, which would represent—that any sinner may expect pardon without repentance. Yet it is that form of false religion, which is common to almost all the unbelieving world. But where, Sir, have I countenanced it? To all the unbelieving world I testify, from the word of God, that—“*except they repent, they will perish.*”

You express your persuasion that my sentiments, when *explained* by myself, “will bear a much more *liberal* appearance than they exhibit” in my Expostulatory Address. I believe, Sir, you have been disappointed. The more clearly and fully those, who believe the Gospel, explain their sentiments, the more illiberal must they appear to the world.

But I beseech you to consider seriously what you mean by *liberal* sentiments in Religion. I should think that the great point about which one, who receives the Scriptures as the word of God, ought to be solicitous, is—that his sentiments in religion be *true*,—that is, conformable to what is revealed in Scripture. Whether they be afterwards considered *liberal* or *illiberal* by the world, is a very unimportant matter. In short *liberality* of sentiment here--

commonly means nothing more, than conformity of sentiment to the generally-received notions: and it seems to be nothing more than this, that you mean by a similar and strange expression at the close of your letter, where you talk of "a more *Catholic* mode of interpreting" the sacred Scriptures. If, in examining the sacred Scriptures, I were to consider --- not what God there declares—but how I might interpret the Scriptures into a coincidence of sentiment with the opinions of men,—I might *nominally* receive them as the word of God, but I would *really* reject them. *Men shall yet know, whose word shall stand,—the Lord's or theirs.* (Jer. xliv. 28.)

You quote from my Address a passage, of which you approve—as containing "a truly Christian sentiment:"—and you add that, if I "have apparently departed from it, it is this deliberate declaration of kindness, which ought to be rested in, as the pledge" of my habitual feeling. I thank you, Sir, for the kindness of your expression: but I confess that I would be much more gratified, by your pointing out where I have departed—if I have really departed---from the sentiment which you quote. The opinion of any man about my *habitual feeling* can do me little good or harm: but I hope I should reckon it an important service, to be shewn by any one---where I may have departed in my writings from the feelings of a Christian. But if you think I have departed from the feelings of kindness to the Methodists, only because I have told them truth which they needed to be told,—and which those among them, who need it most are most unwilling to hear; --- I must consider this only as an *apparent* departure, and not a real one.

You say—that you are obliged to consider that pleasing effusion of brotherly kindness, "as implying a necessity for materially qualifying the denunciation"—that there is a greater difference between the religion of the Gospel and the most refined form of infidelity, than there is between the latter and the

most gross.' Allow me to ask you, Sir, can brotherly kindness imply any necessity for telling lies?---The assertion—or, as you choose to call it, the denunciation—in the unqualified form in which it appears in my Address,—is *true*: and I think I have proved it, in this letter, to be true and to be most important. Nor do I know how it could be *materially qualified*, so as not to convert it into a falsehood.

But you think that I am involved in *inconsistency*, by acknowledging that real Christians *may* exist in an Arminian society;—while I certainly hold that Arminianism is but a *refined form of false religion*, and therefore little better—(nothing better as to the purposes of salvation)—than the most avowed infidelity.—If I had fallen into the inconsistency which you suppose, I hope I should not sacrifice certain and important truth to extricate myself from it. But if you read my Address with a little more attention,--you will perceive that the acknowledgment which you speak of—“that real Christians may exist in an Arminian society”—amounts only to an intimation—that there may be persons, in an Arminian society, who do not *really* hold Arminian tenets; and to an assertion—that I *think* I have found a few such among the Methodists. In this, I see nothing inconsistent with my views of Arminianism.

You ask me whether it would not have been as well upon the whole, that my “terms of condemnation respecting *opinions* had been less dogmatic.”---I think it would not, Sir. To dogmatise on matters of doubtful opinion,—upon matters which the word of God has left undetermined or uncertain,—is always bad. But a believer cannot too positively, or too plainly, protest against every opinion, which contradicts the gospel of Christ. The world, I know, would be comparatively content that Christians should hold every principle of the gospel, if they held them not as matters of undubitable cer-

tainty and infinite importance; if, by latitudinarian scepticism in the mode of holding their opinions, they left room for the infidelity of others to be allowed as something *innocent* and *safe*. But those who hold Evangelical principles only as matters of indifferent opinion, do not yet believe the Gospel with that faith, which is “of the operation of God.”

You propose another question: you say—*If any one can HONESTLY think that St. Peter and I are at issue*, “what a necessity is implied in such a possibility for cautious and charitable judgment” on my part? Why you select St. PETER particularly, as at issue with me,—I am at some loss to conjecture. St. Peter declared the same gospel with St. Paul, and with all the Apostles. I have only to open his epistles, and I find him speaking the language, which is so offensive now. I find him addressing Christians as those who are—“*elect* according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;”—as those whom God, “according to his *abundant mercy*, hath begotten again unto a lively hope *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*;”—as those who are “born again *by the word of God*;”—as those who are “kept by the power of God through *faith* unto salvation:”—as those who, *believing in Jesus Christ*, “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory;”—as those who have “purified their souls *in obeying the truth* through the spirit.” I find him testifying that JESUS CHRIST is “laid in Zion a chief corner-stone, *elect, precious*,” and that “he that *believeth on him* shall not be confounded.” I find him declaring the most awful condemnation against those, who are *disobedient*—or *unbelieving*,—“*who stumble at the word*. And I do not find him supposing any such HONESTY in the unbelieving world, as would imply a necessity for that *cautious and charitable judgment on his part*, of which you speak.

You make some remarks, Sir, on a supposed dif-

ference between the ways, in which you and I have observed the Methodists. Little need be said on this subject. But I apprehend that you have not noticed the chief circumstance of difference. You seem to have observed them with the eye of a religious Philosopher; and satisfied with finding among them a great deal of *religion*—and much that was amiable—respectable—and useful—you seem to have given yourself little trouble to enquire what *kind* of Religion it was, by bringing their religious principles and practices to the test of Scripture. To that test I have endeavoured to call their attention; and that alone I acknowledge as the criterion of *true religion*.

You observe—that you would be “sorry to say one word, to lessen the corrective influence of any” of my justly-applied censures. Which of my censures you conceive to be *justly-applied*, you leave the Methodists and me uncertain. The only one that you have admitted to be just, is my brief censure of their *tumultuous assemblies*: and the corrective influence even of that you weaken, by accounting for their continuance from “the fear of repressing *pious ardours*, where they might easily be *chilled* and *annihilated*.” You zealously oppose the grounds of almost all my other expostulations; and what you have said tends to lessen their corrective influence, by persuading the Methodists—of what they are too ready to believe—that there is in their body “as real excellence as ever was in the Christian world,”—by representing their monitor as a *prejudiced adversary*,—and especially by calling off their attention from the one rule of Christian faith and practice, the *word of God*, to the authority and opinions of men.

In this view, Sir, I candidly confess to you, that I think your pamphlet very mischievous in its tendency. And I would therefore lament, that false charity and zeal for the *reputation* of a body, to whom you were attached, induced you to publish

it,—but that it has afforded me one of the opportunities, which I looked for—not of invading their reputation—but of combating the most dangerous errors which are prevalent in their Society,—and of maintaining the most important truths, which are contradicted by their system, and indeed generally disbelieved. I have considered your remarks on my Address, merely as a favourable occasion for asserting those glorious truths.

We have had different objects, Sir, in writing. Your main object confessedly was—to vindicate the character of the Methodists: mine—to vindicate the *gospel of the grace of God*. This may account for our different modes of writing;—for your dwelling so much upon the former topic;—and my losing sight of it, and bringing forward to a minute examination—the *principles* introduced into your Letter.

The same thing may account for all the advantage, which I have hitherto had over my antagonist, in this controversy;—for I would despise the false modesty, which would conceal my consciousness of having succeeded—in refuting all that is material in your remarks. Any advocate for the truths which I assert,—if he only be enabled to keep them and the Bible which reveals them steadily in view, and be not diverted from his great object by any of the subordinate questions, which will be thrown in his way to turn him aside from it,—in this case any advocate for these truths must be an overmatch for the most ingenious opposer of them.

It would ill become me to degrade the cause in which I am engaged, by intimating any doubt about the general merits of the controversy. But it would ill become me not to acknowledge that, in particular passages, I may have fallen into errors of sentiment or of expression,—either through inadvertency or ignorance. For the detection of any such errors—by friend or foe—either in a public answer, or by private communication,—I trust I shall be

truly thankful. And if I have in any respect done injustice to your remarks, or wounded your personal feelings,—beyond the necessary effect that is connected with the general offensiveness of the subject, and with the refutation of your errors,—let the instances be pointed out, and I trust that I shall be forward to make you the most ample amends. That I have studiously aimed at avoiding every thing of this kind, I can honestly declare.

The controversy, Sir, is not at an end: nor can it be at an end, while Christ has a *church militant here on Earth*. It is a controversy—about that “faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world *to save sinners*.” Of this, I trust that those who shall succeed me in the controversy never will lose sight. This joyful truth,—so simple that the most illiterate believer understands it,—so big with divine wisdom, that those who know it most are most sensible how little of its glory they discern,—this joyful truth is openly denied by Deists; and is as really disbelieved by the great majority of professing Christians. These, while they assent to it in words, deny the real import which is annexed to the words, throughout the scriptures. But if that saying be indeed *worthy of all acceptance*, it must be—not on account of the *sound* of the words,— (for in that view, they are of no more value than a line of the Koran)—but on account of the *meaning* of the words. And those who disbelieve the saying in that *meaning* of it, in which it is *worthy of all acceptance*, disbelieve it as effectually—as the most open Deist.

In that meaning there is no real doubtfulness. Blessed be God! there is not. The whole Bible is a luminous comment upon it. To understand that meaning, is a matter as level to the weakest—as to the most powerful intellect. It is not any intrinsic difficulty or obscurity in the truth, that occasions it to be misconceived by those before whom it is laid. It is their carnal indisposition to the truth. Well

spake our Lord of old—“ Why do ye not understand “ my speech ? even because *ye* cannot hear *my* words. “—Ye are of your father the Devil :—he is a liar “ and the father of it. And *because* I tell you the “ truth, *ye* believe me not.”

Nor let it be objected against the simplicity of the Gospel, for which I contend—that some of the arguments, which I have brought forward, are beyond the comprehension of minds unaccustomed to close reasoning. Perhaps some of them may be so. But you know, Sir, that a truth may be the simplest in the world which there may yet be occasion to vindicate by arguments ever so abstruse :—and of the truth itself the unlettered Peasant may have the clearest comprehension and fullest certainty ;—though he be little capable of detecting the fallacy of objections, by which ingenious men oppose it,—or perhaps even of following the train of reasoning, by which others expose their fallacy.

To you, Sir, the argumentative parts of my reply can have no obscurity, for which I should need to apologize ; and if any of them be inconclusive, you can be at no loss to point out their weakness. Permit me to say that I think you called upon, either to do this, or to acknowledge their force. You have publicly avowed your opinion, that my *views of certain Scripture-doctrines are very erroneous and pregnant with peculiarly pernicious consequences*. You have publicly attacked these views ; and I have as publicly given—what I am bold to say is a confirmation of their truth, and a refutation of your arguments. If I be at all qualified to judge of my reply, it is not of that kind—which you can be warranted to pass by in silence.

But if, from whatever cause, *you* should decline continuing the discussion of those most important subjects,—there are many others, who may well be expected to take your place. I know what multitudes agree with you in rejecting the views of Scripture-doctrines, which I maintain. And among those

multitudes, there are many whose profession is considered as peculiarly binding them to the defence of religious truth ; and not a few—eminent for learning and for talents. It is not by the private inuendo, the occasional sneer, or the indignant invective, that it becomes such men to oppose what they conceive dangerous errors in Religion—publicly maintained ; but by a public examination of the arguments by which they are maintained. To that I invite them ; not from any vain conceit of being their equal, either in learning or in talents,—but from the confidence that my inferiority in either will be more than compensated, by the facility of defending divine truth against its opposers ;—and from a conviction that the subject is of such importance, that it deserves the most serious and full discussion.

I remain, Sir, with best wishes,

Your faithful humble Servant,

JOHN WALKER,

TRINITY COLLEGE,
Nov. 1. 1803.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE Apostle Paul (Rom. xvi. 17, 18.) beseeches his brethren at Rome to *mark them who caused divisions and offences contrary to the Apostolic doctrine which they had learned, and to avoid them.* He ever manifested a godly solicitude that the hearts of Christians might be “knit together in love, and un-“ to all riches of the full assurance of *understanding*, “to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God—“even of the Father and of Christ:” (Col. ii. 2.) --- that they might be “perfectly joined together in “the same *mind* and in the same *judgment*;” and thus might all *speak* the same thing,—professing the same faith of the same glorious Gospel;—so that there should be “no divisions among them.” (1 Cor. i. 10.)—The apostle knew the uniting power of the *TRUTH as it is in JESUS*; and had no idea of any *unity* in the Christian *Church*, but that which was grounded on the *unity* of the Christian *faith*;—which originated in this that its members believed the *same* glorious Gospel. He speaks of *schisms*, or divisions; but never in the sense in which the word is now commonly applied—as a watch-word against Christians,—never as consisting in a separation from those who deny the faith, and introduce another Gospel. On the contrary, he considers all such false teachers as peculiarly *schismatics*, or authors of division; and exhorts believers to *mark* and to *avoid* them. In the passage of his Epistle to the Romans above quoted, he declares their real character: he declares—amidst all the pretensions they often make to eminent godliness—that they “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly”—their own private ends. And he points out one of the main engines which they employed, for disturbing the real unity of the Christian church:—“by

good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple."

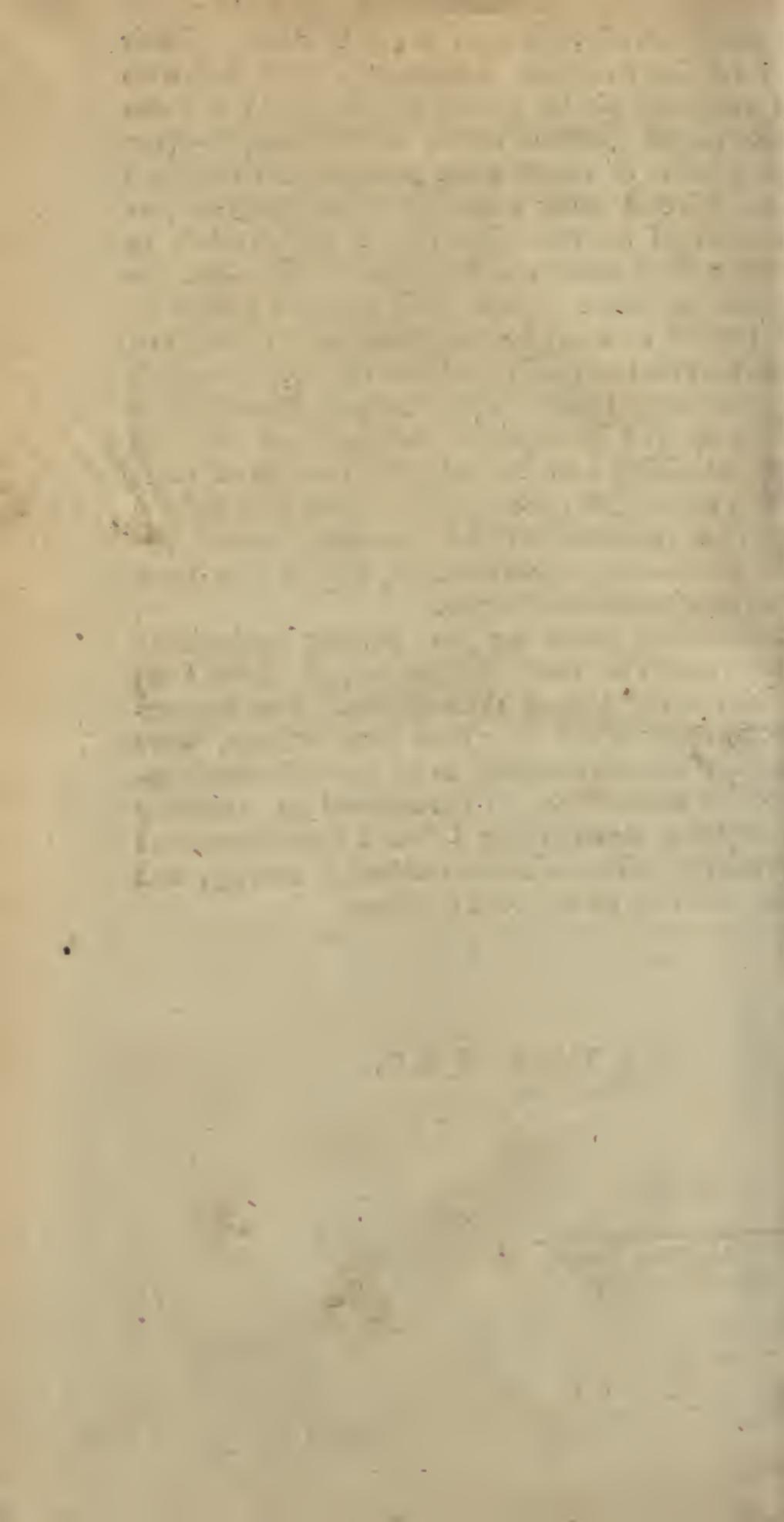
It is at this day needful to warn Christians against such characters and their seductive arts: for the generation of them is not extinct; and never will be extinct, as long as Satan is allowed to exert his opposition against the Church of God. It would not answer the purpose of the father of lies, to employ no instruments but profane and open infidels in order to corrupt the Gospel, and substitute for it something that is not the Gospel, but seems very like it,—he must employ various classes of pious Religionists; whose *sincerity* of attachment to their respective systems of infidelity I do not mean at all to question. And they make use of the same engine in his service at this day, that they used in the days of the Apostle;—*good words and fair speeches*—to "deceive the hearts of the simple."

It would be an interesting and profitable inquiry, to examine the various *good words*, to which they have given a bad currency, in various ages of the church. But perhaps there is none that they more successfully use at this day, than that which I have mentioned, (p. 279.)—**HEART-RELIGION.** It is a *good word* indeed when rightly applied; for it will express the *inward reality* of true Religion, in opposition to the hypocrisy of mere outward profession. But by a dexterous management of this *good word*, some of the most successful opposition is given at present to the Gospel. When the truths of God are asserted, and asserted so that the enemies of them have no other answer;—they contrive to put down the subject, with the *good word*—**HEART-RELIGION.** They set this *in opposition* to the **BELIEF** of the **TRUTH**; to which they give the contemptuous name of **HEAD KNOWLEDGE**. They put themselves forward as the champions of the former; and insinuate that the asserters of the latter are enemies to *heart-religion*; or at least contending for some *speculative* notions that, in comparison of it, are of little con-

quence. And thus their work is done. Their zeal for *heart-religion* is admired; their followers are encreased;—the hearts of the *simple* are deceived;—the glorious truths of the Gospel—(the hearty belief of which alone produces true religion) ---are rejected with contempt as *unimportant*;--- professors of the Apostolic Gospel are decried, as raising a strife about *words* without profit;—and the blinded multitude follow their admired guides in the pursuit of a *mystic something* which they call **HEART-RELIGION**;—satisfied that the doctrine which they are taught must be the Gospel, because it is dressed up with Evangelical names;—and deterred from examining into the scriptural *meaning* of these names, because they are taught to think that such an enquiry is culculated to give them only—what their leaders call—**HEAD-KNOWLEDGE**, and to turn them aside from **HEART-RELIGION**.

I cannot lay down my pen, without apologizing to my readers for many deficiencies, of which I am sensible, in the style of these letters. The circumstances, under which they have been written, were in general so unfavourable, as to preclude much attention to composition. I have aimed at expressing my meaning clearly; but I fear I have sometimes expressed it with too much condensed brevity, and in sentences of an involved structure.

THE END.



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